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GERALD FITZGERALD.

A NOVEL.

BY

GEORGE HERBERT.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL II.

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GERALD FITZGERALD.

CHAPTER I.

MR. GREY had just returned from work, and was about to take his tea and make himself comfortable for the evening, when a hasty knock at the door alarmed him. Very few people besides the postman came to his door with double knocks; and the postman did not come often. When he did, his rat-tat was at once known and recognised.

“Who can it be?” said Mrs. Grey, rising.

“Ah! who can it be?” repeated the husband. And then, as a probable means of ascertaining, he said, “I think you had better go and see, Mary!”

VOL. II.

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Mrs. Grey was of the same opinion ; and she went. She returned, walking backwards in a courtly manner, and ushering into the parlour a gentleman whom her husband had never seen before.

“ Mr. Maldon !” she said. “ You have heard Gerald talk of Mr. Maldon ?”

“ Oh, yes,” said Mr. Grey, “ pray sit down, sir. Here’s a chair, sir ! Come near the fire, sir ! It’s cold of an evening now ? Mary, send that cat out of the room ! Sh—— !—Puss !”

Richard accepted the proffered seat, but did not sit so near the fire as the host wished. It was a peculiarity of Mr. Grey’s that he always liked his visitors to sit near the fire—summer or winter : it was one of his notions of hospitality. Therefore he again directed Richard’s attention to the subject :—

“ Draw your chair up closer, sir ! You’re a long way off from the fire ! Mary,—a few coals !” And Mr. Grey seized the poker

—a bright one—and stirred the fire vigorously.

“My son, sir,” he continued, when Richard had yielded to his wishes, and was red in the face and puffing with the heat. “My son, sir, has often mentioned you to us. Mary, my dear! *do* turn that cat out! And he says that you are very great friends. What do you think of my son’s pictures? Just get another cup and saucer, Mary! You’ll take some tea, of course, sir?”

Richard thought the tea might be a happy medium through which to introduce the object of his visit. So he agreed very readily to take a cup. This made Mr. Grey as delighted as he was busy.

“Mary, my dear! Just reach me that toasting fork! Don’t cut the bread too thick! There, that will do!” And he thrust the fork into a round of bread, leant down towards the grate, and blew a strong breath,—starting the winding-sheets that

hung about the bars, and sending the dust flying like chaff before the wind!

“And what do you think of my son’s pictures, sir?” he repeated. “Ah! that side’s done! Gerald’s very clever, isn’t he, sir? But would you believe it,” and here Mr. Grey left off toasting, and laid the fork across his knee, the bread nearest the table, —“Would you believe it,—that in last Sunday’s paper some envious rascal said that his skies were ‘garish,’ and that his browns were greens?”

“Indeed!” said Richard.

“Yes,” continued Mr. Grey, resuming the toasting. “As though any one’s greens could be browns, or browns could be greens! As to the ‘garish,’—the word puzzles me; but I suppose it means something bad!”

“My dear!” said Mrs. Grey, “see how you’re burning that toast!”

“Ah! am I?” exclaimed the husband, and he drew back the fork, brought

the smoking bread from the fire, and filled the room with incense !

“ You take milk and sugar, I suppose, sir ?” inquired Mrs. Grey, diffidently.

“ Both ! thank you,” replied Richard.

The tea was poured out, and the toast well scraped, buttered, and laid before Richard. Mr. Grey watched that toast with anxiety ! It pained the good man to see that it was untouched—that no pressing, no reproaches heaped by Mr. Grey upon himself for having burned it,—could induce Richard to eat as became a visitor ! The tea, too, went but slowly ; Richard merely sipped it ; and even Mrs. Grey’s statement, that there was a better cup in the pot, failed to persuade him to do more.

This was agony to Mr. Grey. He could not sit quiet under it ! He had no remedy but to poke the fire, and look round to see if the cat had re-entered ! At last he spoke :

“ You’ve seen Gerald lately, have you, sir ?”

"Yes," returned Richard, "very lately."

"Ah!" said Mr. Grey, "perhaps he'll come up to-night?"

"I fear not," was the reply.

"You *fear* not, Mr. Maldon! Why do you fear not? Is anything the matter?"

"Well, the truth is," said Richard, bursting at once into business, "I have only just left him. He's in a little trouble; very slight, I assure you!—To-morrow, I hope, will set all to rights."

"Where, where is he, Mr. Maldon?" said the father, dropping his cup. "Is he ill? has he had an accident?"

"A slight one," replied Richard. "A blow on the forehead, that's all—nothing serious. He will be well in a day or two!"

"But why didn't he come here? Why does he keep away? Why didn't you bring him with you?" said the mother, clutching Richard's arm.

"Well, the truth is, he couldn't well come. He's in custody!"

Mrs. Grey started and looked at her husband. Mr. Grey rose from his seat and asked for his hat.

“Where is he?—Take me to him Mr. Maldon! In custody! How did he get in custody?”

Richard stated the facts, just as they happened; and when the story was concluded, and the danger made plain and apparent, Mr. Grey seemed relieved. Gerald had done nothing to deserve punishment. He was thankful for that! But Uncle William!—How came he in such a position? Richard could give no explanation; he merely saw the poor fellow, bleeding, remonstrating, and feebly struggling in the grasp of a policeman!

Mr. Grey went away with Richard,—humbled, ashamed, that Gerald’s friend should have seen William in such a plight! As he walked along, he told the story of his brother’s disgrace:

“It was our fault, sir,” he said, “and

yet we were not to blame. I'd have done anything,—I offered to do anything—for my brother. But he got among vagabonds; he lived the life of the public house; he let his companions abuse and insult me, even when I went to drag him from his ruin! And, now, sir,—now it has come to this!”

It happened that there were many pickpockets, disturbers of the peace, idlers, and the like—apprehended that day: the cell at the police station was crowded with them. It was a close, unwholesome place, destitute of all the requisites of decency, abounding in filth, and utterly unfit for the purpose it was applied to. Into this place Gerald and his uncle were cast,—their wounds undressed, and their sufferings made a mockery of! A sponge and a wooden bowl half-filled with foul water, were handed to them, and with these they had to content themselves, and wash the blood from their faces as best they might!

Their companions smiled when they saw

Gerald—a well-dressed, gentleman-like young fellow—bathing the forehead of a ragged and unclean old man, who laughed, cried, and uttered strange nonsense during the operation! Still more were they surprised when the young fellow took his handkerchief from his pocket, and bound it about the old man's head! There was no one to bathe Gerald's forehead, or bind it with a handkerchief; so he bound it himself with the cravat from his neck.

The evening passed; the night came; and Gerald was surprised that he had seen nothing of his father or Richard Maldon! His last words to Richard were "Go to my father and explain as mildly as you can what has happened. I suppose they will release me upon bail!" And in this hope he waited patiently till midnight.

Then he pushed through the crowd about him, went to the door of the cell, and obtained speech with its guardian. The man was a gruff, coarse fellow, promoted from

the Irish constabulary for an act of signal daring and decision. Perhaps these acts, exercised among the lawless and the criminal, are not well calculated to soften the heart, and interest it for misfortune.

“None of you’ll be bailed,” he said. “You’re a gentleman, I daresay, and think you can do anything! But you can’t. We like to get one of your sort now and then. It’s a change!” and after this speech he was dumb.

Gerald pushed his way back to his uncle. Truly the way was not far to push; for the cell was scarcely a dozen feet long, and not, by many feet, so wide. But into this space upwards of twenty people were packed! How they found room to stand, sit, or lie down, was a marvel! But there was no escape: they were fast, and must remain so!

Oh the horrors of that night!—the vile odours, the blasphemous language, the blows given and taken in darkness, the frantic struggles for more room, more air,

for a place to rest an arm or a head on ! And as the atmosphere grew closer and fouler, came the terrors of suffocation ! Even the low, hardened vagabonds, who could count their imprisonments by the score, had never known an imprisonment so frightful as that ! They said so ; they cried aloud ; they raved, swore hideous oaths, and bruised their fists against the hard walls, in futile outbursts of passion !

And the poor, weak creatures who were buffeted about by these raging ruffians !— Oh how they suffered ! They were known by their feeble choking cries ; by their prayers, tears, and at last by their curses ! And in the morning, when the door opened, and the air came in, and the strong men gasped and gurgled it like stranded fish,— these feeble creatures were overpowered, and fell or fainted as they lay !

Uncle William was the feeblest, the faintest of these. When Gerald drew him from among the arms, legs, and shoulders

that were pressing on and about him, and tried to set him on his feet, he could not stand! He drooped, and collapsed into an unshapely heap! Gerald himself could scarcely support the sudden change of atmosphere; it made his head dizzy, and the cell and its occupants seemed to spin and dance about him!

When the delivery came, half a dozen of these men were taken straight to the hospital. William was one of the half-dozen. He took no notice of Gerald when he left; indeed, he did not know who the young man was, but accepted his kindnesses with a muddled and thankless submission.

Gerald's astonishment was great, when, some little time afterwards, he was singled out from the pickpockets, led to an inspector, and told that there was no charge against him—at least, that the charge had been withdrawn!

“Withdrawn!” said Gerald. “And why was it ever made?”

“ Well, sir !” returned the inspector, “ the constable confesses that he was in error. Several highly respectable witnesses have sent their cards in your favour—among them, Lord Dalton. He saw the whole affair ! X 25 is waiting to apologise to you, sir !”

Gerald had nothing to do but to accept this explanation. He was angered, but not vindictive. Besides, he had no sooner turned from the inspector, than right in his path, humbly bowing, and hat in hand, stood X 25 ! Gerald recollected the fall of the truncheon, and felt vastly inclined to have the slight satisfaction of knocking the man down ! But his better nature prevailed, and he listened :

“ I am very sorry, sir—very ! I thought you belonged to the mob, sir ! I didn’t see at fust that you was a gen’l’mán. I fancied I heard you say that the old man was your uncle ! But of course it was fancy, sir ! It couldn’t be ! How cou’d he be your uncle ?

—a gentleman like you, sir ! There's a cab, sir, a waiting : I fetched it. Can I do anything else for you, sir ? I shall be most proud. Ah ! sir ! we policemen has a good deal to put up with ! Look at my head, sir !” And here X 25 ducked his bare head for Gerald's better observation. “ That white place, sir, was a brick !—an Irishman threw it from a three-pair window. You see this ear, sir ? It's only half a one !—an Irishman bit off the rest, and swallowed it that it shouldn't appear against him. This black mark under the left eye, sir, was done by a foreigner !—with his latch-key sir. I'm covered with scars and bruises. If I was to take off my things, sir, I could show you——”

Gerald was fain to turn aside, and mutter something like a forgiveness ; and, indeed, had he not done so, X 25, who was terribly in earnest, would have carried his last idea into execution, and denuded himself of his garments. Already the top buttons of his

greatcoat were loosened, his hand was on his belt, and his look was resigned and martyr-like! But as Gerald turned away, these demonstrations ceased, and the man—somewhat disappointed that his penitence had not been profitable in a pecuniary sense—merely muttered, “Thank you, sir!”

Just as Gerald passed the threshold he was tapped gently and insinuatingly on the arm. He looked down and saw a small, bandy man, with keen grey eyes and a hook nose, gazing anxiously up to him. The little man carried a packet of dirty blue paper, folded lengthwise, and tied with dingy red tape.

“Beg your pardon, sir!” he said. “But I’ve mastered the facts of the case. They’re here, sir,—they’re here!” And the little man smiled, and tapped his forehead. “It’s a capital one, sir, capital! Couldn’t be better! I’ve the policeman’s name, number, and all necessary particulars! He has a small pension—about twenty pounds a year

—from the war office, and his wife washes for the force. He'll pay, sir, he'll pay, after the first few steps. He'll never let it come to trial. My office is just round the corner!"

"Pay!" said Gerald, "for what?"

"Why, for staying proceedings!" replied the little man, rubbing his hands gleefully.

"What proceedings?"

"Why, sir!—surely——! But I may as well be explicit! The proceedings in an action for assault and false imprisonment! 'Grey versus Biddle!' Biddle's his name! I've half drawn the declaration. Just step round, sir!"

Gerald looked down at the little lawyer in astonishment! "I've forgiven the man!" he said.

"What!" exclaimed the practitioner, turning red, and stammering slightly. "For—for—for—given him! For—for—for—given a man that can p—p—pay! I tell you, sir, its such as you that ruin us! How are we to l—l—ive? how are we to l—l—ive!" And the little man gave Gerald a glance of

withering scorn, and ran to the nearest public-house to drown his disappointment.

Gerald stepped into the cab, and was just being driven off, when Mr. Grey came up, hot and breathless. He flung open the door, and jumped into the vehicle.

“So you’re released, my boy, are you? You’re released! Thank God for that! But where is —, —where is —?”

“My uncle?” said Gerald.

“No! don’t say the word! Don’t say ‘uncle,’ my boy! He’s my brother; but no, no, not your uncle! I can bear the shame! But you, my boy—you shan’t! He’s *my* brother—nothing more! And is *he* released?”

“He’s in the hospital!” said Gerald.

Mr. Grey sighed heavily, and was silent. But when the cab arrived at its destination, and Gerald got out, the driver started off anew with a passenger who deprecated all idea of company by dumb but expressive motions,

CHAPTER II.

LORD DALTON, having thoroughly recovered from his serious accident without a word of enquiry from Sir Roger Maldon, began to think that the Baronet had forgotten him. He determined however, not to forget the Baronet ; and as his captaincy in the Blues did not so occupy his time as to deprive him of the advantages of society and the recreations of country life, he was well able to carry out his friendly resolve. He seldom did military duty, except upon state occasions ; for his colonel was a capital fellow, and tolerant of aristocratic foibles. It

would have made but little difference to Lord Dalton had his colonel been anything else; as it was his custom to exchange upon the least appearance of difficulty. In this way he had quitted the lancers for the hussars, the hussars for the dragoons, and ultimately the dragoons for the Blues. He cared little about the particular corps, so long as he saw his name in the *Army List*, and was not called upon to perform military duty when he wanted to do something else!

With leisure, then, on his hands, he thought it well to occupy some of it by seeing how affairs went on at Maldon Priory; and being about—as he said—to invite “half the county” to his place, it came into his head to take Sir Roger Maldon’s invitation himself. Therefore, one fine morning, just as the Baronet was helping Marie to her saddle, and De Lisle tenderly and assiduously performing a like office for Blanche, his Lordship trotted along the Priory

avenue, and pulled up before their astonished eyes !

“ Surprised I haven’t been before, eh, Maldon ?” he said. “ Of course you expected me ; but I’ve been so confoundedly busy in London and elsewhere, and I’ve got such a memory, that—I know you’ll excuse me !—you were quite forgotten ! Not quite, though,” he continued, eyeing Marie significantly, “ How could I ?”

The Baronet replied, as politely as he might : He was glad to see his Lordship ; he meant to have called at Dalton House, but ——. And here he curled his lip, and broke off the sentence abruptly ; for he was disgusted that common courtesy should sometimes be so closely connected with common lying !

Lord Dalton, blind to all this, was careless about the answers he received. “ I see you’re going to ride,” he said. “ Which way ?—don’t turn back : I’ll ride with you.

How dark this place of yours is!—why don't you thin the trees? And then those crows! There isn't a crow in my place!"

It was always Lord Dalton's fate to engross the conversation. He seldom wanted replies, and therefore it taxed the forbearance rather than the energy of his friends to talk with him. He was satisfied if he was listened to. Had a dummy been set up for his companion, and the deception been undetected by his Lordship, he would have conversed with it, asked it questions, slapped it on the back, poked it in the ribs, and parted from it, as cheerfully as he would have parted from a capable creature! To him, indeed, what was the world but a collection of dummies, with one here and there in which the *vitæ* preponderated to an unpleasant degree over the *lignum*!

The baronet, however, having an innate and hurtful consciousness of this, played dummy very unwillingly. Though silent, he was consumed with rage; and though

outwardly placid, there was that within him which, had Lord Dalton known of its existence, might have shaken even his effrontery ! But as he knew nothing of it he went on :

“ Three gentlemen to two ladies ! I’ll not be an outsider ! ” And he fell in between Marie and Blanche, and placed Sir Roger and De Lisle next the bushes !

The lanes were narrow—much too narrow for five horses abreast ; and therefore Lord Dalton’s stirrup-iron galled the flanks of Blanche’s horse on one side and rubbed Marie’s habit on the other ! The two outsiders of course came in for the prickly favours of the hedge ; till De Lisle, tired of having his legs lacerated, whispered to Blanche and fell back with her.

In such a situation what could the French gentleman do but talk ?—what could Blanche do but listen ? De Lisle talked very well, too, used a romance-tongue—a kind of *langue d’oc* with the modern polish on it—

and his tones were soft, and his English was wonderful!

“What a strange lord that is!” he said, “I think he tires your brother. This England of yours is full of curiosities—contrasts. What could be more striking than the dissimilarity between the two gentlemen before us—both of the same class, nearly the same age, neighbours, friends, and yet with scarcely a shade of character in common!”

Blanche was in a reverie. That De Lisle was talking, even that he was leaning towards and looking into her face, she knew full well; but of what he said or meant she had not the remotest idea! When he ceased, the silence disturbed her, and she turned hastily, smiled curiously, and said “Dear me!--indeed!”

This was said as though De Lisle, instead of expressing an obvious fact, had advanced something strange and startling.

“Is not ‘indeed’ an exclamation of surprise in your language?” he asked.

“Sometimes; it may be made so.”

“And you made it so?”

“Did I?” said Blanche, smiling, “Well, you must pardon me! I was dreaming, I confess.”

“And I disturbed you?”

“You did.”

“Now it is for me to say ‘indeed’!” exclaimed De Lisle, with animation. “What subject but one could so engross your meditations?”

“Ah, what but one!” said Blanche, dreaming again.

“And that one?”

“Shall I confess?”

“Yes. But I guess your sin!”

“Sin!” exclaimed Blanche, with surprise.

“I speak the jargon of the confessional merely! We are playing at priest and penitent. Now say,—what occupies so engrossingly the thoughts of Miss Maldon?”

Shall we call it sin, or shall we call it——”

De Lisle paused ; Blanche smiled, and said “ Well ? ”

“ Love ? ” was the answer. “ Love has sometimes been accounted a sin, but never a heavy one ! ”

“ And yet,” said Blanche, “ it pays many penalties in the world, does it not ? ”

“ Many, I believe ; none, that I know of ! But you——”

“ Know as little as yourself ! ” said Blanche, rallying, “ I merely echo the talk of the world ! ”

De Lisle made an impatient movement, and pricked his horse so sharply that the poor animal took him out of earshot for confidential conversation. What did the girl mean by her dreams and her half-confidences ?—Was she in love, or was she not ? How well laid seemed the train of discovery, and yet with a mere breath Blanche blew it all to nothing ! The confessor had no patience with her equivocation : he knew

he had one of the keenest wits in the world, and yet a mere girl turned its edge, and came harmless out of the contest! From that moment De Lisle made his friend's sister a study, and determined to break down her barriers of artifice, or storm her strong defences of simplicity. He would sit down before her, as it were, and take her by regular and scientific strategy. But before doing this, he considered his own strength, and asked himself—Did he love the girl? The answer compelled him to acknowledge that his whole strength consisted in vanity of conquest!

In the meantime, the baronet was just as much put about as his friend. Lord Dalton had succeeded in irritating him to a degree almost unbearable, by keeping up a running fire of rough compliment to Marie, and playing various simple pranks with her horse's bridle. The horse resented these liberties, and now and then chafed his bit

and flung the foam across the baronet's shoulder.

"You'll come, won't you?—and bring Mam'selle with you," said the young lord, "I shall have a house full; she'll be delighted; and so shall I!"

To impress this compliment upon Marie, he tapped her horse about the ears with his riding-whip. The horse started, reared, and threw its rider!

"Fool!" said the baronet, dismounting, and casting a glance of fire at the culprit.

"Eh? what?" said his lordship, sliding from his horse, and smiling incredulously. "It aint the beast's fault! Don't call him a fool! I never saw a better fall in my life! Mam'selle hasn't hurt herself a bit. But upon my word, Maldon, you *should* have your horses better broken! A man ought to be careful what he keeps in his stables!"

It happened that Marie was not seriously hurt; the bushes saved her, and she came out of the danger with a torn habit, a

grazed hand, and a little mud. The mishap, however, put an end to the day's riding; for though Marie insisted upon re-mounting, it was only to return to the Priory. When that point was gained, and Lord Dalton was just excusing himself from entering the house by pleading an engagement, Sir Roger beckoned him aside, and they turned down the avenue.

"I've a word to say to you," exclaimed the Baronet, sternly.

"Ah, and I've a word to say to you!" returned the young lord; "Let me have my word first. Now, I am a man of honour, and like to do things fairly. Are you going to marry Mam'selle De Lisle?"

"Lord Dalton!" said Sir Roger.

"Oh, there!—a fig for ceremony! Never mind the 'Lordship'! I've asked you a plain question."

"Lord Dalton," said Sir Roger, haughtily, "your manners are—to say the least—exceptionable; your company is to me any-

thing but agreeable. I came out here to tell you that I look upon your conduct as ridiculous and boyish, and that for the future we had better ride different ways! You have now put an impertinent question, of which I am quite at a loss to understand the motive!"

"Oh, never mind the motive!" replied his Lordship. "But if you press me for it, I'll tell you. The woman's attractive, looks well at table; and I want such a woman to head mine. I'm going to give up the army and settle, and I fancy I should like to settle with her. D'ye see?"

Sir Roger was thunderstruck! He held Lord Dalton in the most hearty contempt, and yet something made him tremble at the idea of his rivalry! His position, his fortune, were far above the Baronet's. Besides, it had never entered Sir Roger's head to marry Marie! What if, while he was dallying, she should hear of this prospect?

Would she refuse it? The question agitated him strangely, and gave him feelings that had never troubled him before.

Lord Dalton anticipated something of this kind, and was compassionate :

“ Now understand me, Maldon : I’ve no intention to enter the field against you, if you’ll tell me honestly that you’re in it. The circumstances of the case, our relative positions, would render that unfair. Besides, the lady’s in your house, and she’s your acquaintance. Say that you want her, and she’s yours !”

Pride alone kept the Baronet’s passion within bounds. “ My Lord,” he said, “ I am indebted to you for your delicacy—your consideration ! Further than this, I have only to say that these words must be our last !”

“ Stay !” exclaimed the young Lord, as Sir Roger turned away to end the interview. “ What am I to understand ?”

“Whatever your comprehension may be capable of!” And this time, the Baronet escaped, and the interview was over.

“Well!” said his Lordship, “at any rate I’ve told him my mind, I’ve satisfied the requirements of honour! Now for the sport! Yoicks! Tallyho! Eh?”

The last word was addressed to a dark gentleman, with a piercing eye, who started from the trees just as the Baronet turned out of the avenue.

“I came,” said the dark gentleman, “to tell you not to think any more of the little accident that happened to my sister.—It’s a mere trifle; she’s not hurt. Good-bye!” And De Lisle shook Lord Dalton’s hand heartily, and returned from whence he came.

CHAPTER III.

MONSIEUR DE LISLE was not so calm and so assured as he was wont to be. He laid deliberate siege to the English girl's heart ; but day after day—apparently without any effort—his mines were blown up, and his most reliable artillery silenced ! His vanity of conquest grew to be *anxiety* for conquest, and he really feared now and then that he was in love ! But the worst of us have an idea of what love should be, though we may make no pretension to be perfect in the matter ; and De Lisle, being a man of keen perception and great worldly wisdom, was

convinced that his intermittent fears were groundless. The golden vein of self-sacrifice that runs through the pure passion and distinguishes it from the counterfeit, he felt nothing of; but he did feel that he was resisted, and he suffered from a craving to subdue!

This craving is very common in the world, and has its hecatomb of victims; for in matters of the heart, there is everywhere much license for wrong. The work of injury is often studied as a science, made a boast of, and success in it gladly laid to the account of personal graces! The Indian has a passion for scalps, and hangs them about his wigwam that his brother braves may applaud and imitate. A similar ambition animates some civilised creatures, who, after making the world hideous with the spectacle of fallen and degraded Beauty, boast of their achievements in ribald jests, perhaps written recollections, that help to nurture and direct rising Don Juans!

They are proud of these achievements till they are grey-headed, and then haply they repent! The Indian faith deserts them there: Heaven will scarcely hold them and their trophies!

Utterly unconscious was Blanche that her brother's friend thought of her with such interested constancy. His marked attentions were put down to his politeness, his vivacity, and the habits of his nation. Had he gone on his knees to the parlour-maid, unbosomed himself to the cook, or addressed the gardener's wife in terms of affectionate passion, Blanche would hold him not guilty because he was a Frenchman! Why, had not a little *bonne* who came to the Priory with some of Lady Maldon's visitors, taken a carving-knife to the boy who kept the crows from the kitchen-garden, and threatened to have his life if he would not love her! Setting the carving-knife aside, all this was natural, and there was no harm in it.

The result was that Blanche shunned

De Lisle less and listened to him more. She became perfectly familiar and easy with him. She liked his conversation, and surrendered herself to his company just as she might have surrendered herself to the company of a courteous and attentive brother. She never dreamt that he behaved himself otherwise than as a brother—a French one—should. Besides, De Lisle was almost equally kind and attentive to Lady Maldon. He was pleased to compliment her upon various matters, to notice any new change in her dress, and to hint trifles in the matter of fashion. He had a friend at Cologne, a neighbour and patron of one of the Farinas; and from this friend he now and then received a case of long narrow-necked bottles, filled with fragrant water from a neighbourhood not over fragrant. One or more of these bottles mostly adorned the toilet-table of Lady Maldon.

At dinner, too, De Lisle watched her ladyship as faithfully as the man who waited

for her plate. He never tired of walking by her side—*she* did not walk much now—in the grounds. There, he entertained her with stories made expressly to her mind, and he introduced a De Lisle into most of them:—

“Your ladyship will remember that Louis was pacing hurriedly up and down the chamber——”

“Yes, Chevalier.”

“Marie Antoinette, Madame Elizabeth, and the unfortunate Dauphin following the unhappy king, clutching at his dressing-gown, begging him, entreating him, to fly!”

“Yes.”

“At that moment, my father entered the apartment, sword in hand, the blade dripping with plebeian blood!”

“Ah, he was one of those gallant gentlemen who surrounded the king, was he not, Chevalier?—the ‘three hundred’ of whom Byron speaks:

‘Of the three hundred grant but three!’

They guarded the stairs, I believe?”

De Lisle bowed, and went on :

“ At that moment a great crash was heard : the mob were in the palace ! Door after door yielded, till they neared the king’s apartment. ‘ They come this way ! ’ said my father, looking meaningly at Louis. ‘ Let them come ! ’ replied the martyr. * * * Your ladyship knows the rest : that horrid red cap was placed upon the king’s head ! ”

“ Yes, I recollect ; and the wretches put the cap on a pole afterwards, and as the king would not bow to it, they made him shoot an apple from the Dauphin’s head ! Wonderful, wasn’t it, that the poor boy escaped ? ”

“ Wonderful, indeed ! ” said De Lisle. “ But I hear the dinner-bell ! We have a new *entrée* ; I suggested it privately to the cook. I trust your ladyship will approve the novelty. ”

Blanche was a witness to all but the ludicrous parts of this friendly intercourse, and was misled by it. She would as soon have expected De Lisle to make overtures

of a tender nature to her mother as to herself! Therefore his gallantries, even when they seemed to exceed the limits of strict English propriety, only provoked her to smile and shake her head at him, in utter ignorance that he was feeling his way and trying how far he might advance towards his object. She never imagined that she was listening to aught but idle romance, any more than had De Lisle read to her the play of *Romeo and Juliet*, she would have placed herself in the position of the heroine and taken to heart the soft passages!

The area of De Lisle's operations was, however, about to change. One very wet morning, when the London season was approaching its zenith, the baronet came down to breakfast with a proposition:

"What do you say to a month or two in London, Monsieur?"

De Lisle hesitated. What was Blanche going to do?

“What do you say, Marie?”

Marie also hesitated, for she had something on her mind. The uncertain attentions of her host were not satisfactory. He had—as she saw plainly enough—driven away Lord Dalton because the young aristocrat paid her too many rough compliments; and yet he made no advance whatever for authority to exhibit a jealous disposition: he was, in fact, assuming the airs of a proprietor without anything like bargain or sale having taken place on either side. To her, this was a new and not at all an improved illustration of the fabulous dog in the hypothetical manger. It occurred to Marie, however, that the town was a more favourable sphere for bringing her perplexities to a crisis than the country; and she therefore expressed her readiness to adopt her host's suggestion.

De Lisle did the same when he learnt that Blanche was to be one of the party. That she was included was due to the fact

that her brother wished to occupy De Lisle, and to escape from being constantly one of a trio. Then, how about Lady Maldon? What was to be done with her? In this extremity the physician's advice was taken, and he thought it best that her ladyship should not dare the excitements of town, but that she should elevate one of the maids to the position of a companion, and keep as quiet as she could at the Priory. She was not very well just now, he thought!

"So you're all going to leave me!" said her ladyship, when they were about to depart. "Well, I shall do the best I can. I shall have some friends to visit me!"

"What friends?" enquired the physician, anxiously.

"Oh, my cousins, of course! They've been waiting to come a long time!"

The physician looked serious, and when Lady Maldon turned aside, he whispered to the baronet:

"Dissuade her ladyship, if you can, from

having visitors—especially those she has alluded to. You know, of course ——”

The carriage, however, drove up, and Sir Roger jumped into it without hearing all the doctor had to say.

“ Good bye, Chevalier !” exclaimed Lady Maldon. “ I shall miss you more than anybody. Mind you come back again ! Good bye, Roger ! Blanche, my dear, send down some handkerchiefs—from Bond Street. Good bye !” and the carriage drove off.

As the party passed through the village, a woman ran wildly out of a cottage in and about which there seemed to be sad confusion.

“ Miss Blanche !—For God’s sake —— !”

But the coachman cracked his whip and drove rapidly on.

The cottage from which the woman ran out was once the habitation of Tom Jackson and his family ; and the woman was Betsy his wife. The bailiff had triumphed, had obtained the authority he wanted ; and the Jacksons were houseless !

CHAPTER IV.

THE progress of the novel was not so rapid as its author had been led to anticipate. Every now and then Richard's thoughts came to a full stop and his invention ceased to be. He had a nice sense of propriety in the matter, and a just abhorrence of mere fustian and unreason. The epic had taught him this; and though he did not exactly adopt the advice of the critic who recommends a young author to blot out all those passages which strike him as being particularly fine, he was careful to eliminate from his language the superlative nothings

in which unfledged and amateur authors delight to indulge.

Once, then, when he could not see his way clearly before him—indeed, when his *dramatis personæ* had reached that dead lock so much lauded in the *Critic*—he gave his pen a holiday and went to the studio. There he found Gerald preparing to start for the Academy, not solely because he had pictures there, but because other pictures had come under the notice of the Hanging Committee, and the artist liked to hold communion with whatever was worthy in his art. Richard knew very little—and did not care very much—about pictures; but like the man who had “no appetite for dinner,” and yet expressed his intention to eat as much as those who had,—the manuscript author was quite ready to give his opinion upon matters of taste, and to dogmatise as confidently as the best art-critic going! He therefore went with Gerald to the Academy.

The year was considered a good one ; for many of the great men had done their best, and all the little men had done better than usual. Add to this that there was a heresy showing itself in the world of art—something like the belief which in the religious world begat Primitive Methodists—and it will be seen that the Academy year was of more than ordinary moment. The title of this heresy began with “Pre” and ended with “ism,” and between these two terribly burdened syllables, was placed a name much revered among painters, and held in high honour by all men. Freely translated, it might be understood as—painting after a certain style that was before a certain other style ;—but the great critics, with Mr. Buskin at their head, gave to it a grand and mysterious meaning that took it beyond the range of common intelligence and made it awfully comprehensive ! One characteristic of this heretical art, was its nicety of detail. Nothing escaped the brushes of its

disciples. That woman was unfortunate who, with a mole on her back or a pimple on her nose, should happen to sit to one of the new school. As sure as fate the mole would go in, or the pimple would be picked out, with a skill that might merit the good word of a man learned in cutaneous disorders! Yet some of these painters were poets withal, and conceived lovely things, and made a name so famous that it was sad to see them now and then abusing it!

They were not, however, the only wonders of the year. There were pictures by the great Florid, a classical artist, who, season after season, cruelly exposed his naked figures in this cold climate of ours! In this painter's early time, somebody incautiously compared him with Rubens, and told him he had a bold touch. From that moment he became brazen!

Then there was a picture by the low-life artist, the great St. Giles. His management of fat men seated upon ale tubs, and

fat women sweltering in kitchen interiors, was wonderful ! His talent was essentially adipose and greasy, his inspiration thoroughly and entirely domestic. In one of his pictures, where there were two fat women with their arms a-kimbo, the painter had placed a turnip-peeling in the foreground ; and this idea—so Hogarthian, as the critics said ; so æsthetic, as the deep thinkers pronounced it—was a fortune to him ! He received commissions enough to fill his easel for years to come ; and as it would not do to have a turnip-peeling in every kitchen, this little touch of nature in one instance became a horseradish ; in another an onion ; and in a third the notion was developed, with an accession of local colouring, in a potato !

The picture, however, which, after those painted by the art-heretics, attracted the most attention and the greatest crowd, was that entitled “ Dogs after a Rat,” the property of a sporting nobleman. The artist

who conceived and executed this charming work was of the suggestive school, and had mastered the true secret of his craft, which—so the critics said—was to hint much and to depict little. He carried out his view of the principle—*ars est celare artem*—to its full extent, and the result was that now and then he hid his figures altogether ! In the picture under consideration, the tail of the rat was visible—as it must be admitted the tail of a rat occasionally is—above a gap in the flooring ; while the bristling whiskers of the dogs peeped in at either extremity of the canvass. In the foreground were some small pieces of coal and a rusty nail ; and in the background other coals were suggested. What could be more admirable than this ?

Richard Maldon, looking at these things, and ignorant as he was of the principles of art, of course had something to say about them :

“ I once thought that ordination of the

Koran very ridiculous which condemned those who painted pictures in this world to find souls for them in the next. My opinion is somewhat different now."

"And why?" asked Gerald.

"Because I see that such a law would be salutary in this country. We should have fewer things of this kind."

"What!—the great attractions of the Exhibition?"

"Even so."

"Oh, nonsense!—You know nothing about the matter. Those pictures represent fortunes, and their painters are the idols of Fame!"

"Idols, indeed!—and even you, who ought to know better, bow down before them! Had you been a painter of such things I could never have endured you. Let us get out of this unwholesome atmosphere. Ah——!"

Richard suddenly drew back, and turned again to the pictures, pinching Gerald

tightly by the arm, and telling him by certain signs to cast his eye towards the other side of the room. Gerald did so, and there he saw two ladies—one of whom he had seen before—and two gentlemen who were perfect strangers to him. One of the gentlemen, a dark, eagle-eyed man,—looking with a very insinuating expression into the face of his companion—said, after referring to the catalogue :

“ ‘ Julia writing to Don Juan’ ! Ah ! from your great Byron !—I recollect the story well. Do you ? ”

The answer was inaudible.

“ You should then : I’ll get the poem, and read it to you.”

The party passed on. “ I did not know,” said Richard, trembling violently, “ that my sister was in town ! ”

After a time the artist and his friend left the gallery, both of them dull and dejected. Gerald scarcely knew what made him so, unless it might be the look and language

that Blanche's companion had addressed to her. What right had the fellow to talk to Miss Maldon about Don Juan?—Why was she leaning so confidently on his arm, and letting him look so boldly into her face? After asking himself these questions a dozen times, he found that he was getting more and more miserable; and as Richard—who was miserable too—could offer him no consolation, he turned towards home, and left his companion to the poor society of his hotel.

This hotel was one of the many “homes for the homeless” with which London abounds: a dingy, desolate place, with its whole administrative strength concentrated in the culinary department, and its chief normal advantage that of “well-aired beds.” It was a place made only to eat, drink, and sleep in:—good entertainment, perhaps, for beast, but not quite so good, without some other matters, for man! It was plain, however, that the hotel-keeper had studied

English tastes and prejudices ; that he knew an Englishman abroad to be suspicious of strange faces—a man who liked to be boxed up in a coffee-room with mahogany partitions, crimson curtains, and brass rails ; who had a strange love for sand or sawdust on the floors of his refectory ; and who wished to be a unit and to be known by a number. All these peculiarities of the Englishman abroad had been closely studied by the hotel-keeper.

Richard Maldon was known by a number. He was No. 15. No. 15 was considered to be a quiet, studious young man, of no great importance, and extravagant only in pens, ink, and paper. His means were—truly enough—thought to be limited, and his desires much too moderate for a gentleman. Now, for instance, after his visit to the Academy, he seated himself in one of the coffee-room boxes, remained there for an hour without ordering anything, and when he did give an order it was for the newspaper !

This conduct always irritated the head waiter—who busied himself in a recess at the further end of the room,—especially as he was a familiar man, with a great fund of anecdote, and accustomed to talk freely to the old frequenters of the place. He felt that he was entitled to talk with impunity to so small and graceless a man as Richard ; and therefore when the paper was ordered, he drew his head from the recess, put a towel on his arm, and came forward. Laying the palms of his hands flat on the table, and leaning towards his victim, he said, with that greasy smile peculiar to head waiters at third-rate taverns :

“ Fine day, sir ! Heard the news ? ”

“ Yes,—No ! ” returned Richard, answering curtly.

“ Stocks have fallen to ninety-seven for cash—ninety-seven and one-eighth for the account ! ”

“ Indeed ! ”

“ Had quite a scene here just now, sir ! ”

“ Ah !”

“ Yes sir. You might have seen an old gent, wore hessian boots a good deal too big for him, used to sit just opposite, eat a good deal of curry, sir,—dined here to day. When I cleared his table, I missed a spoon. Now I’ve lost a good many spoons lately, and I kept my eye on the old gent. When he went out of the room I followed him. ‘ Good day’ says he, ‘ Charles.’ ‘ Ah !’ says I, ‘ We aint going to say good day, yet !’ And I beckoned to a constable. ‘ Look here, policeman,’ says I, ‘ what’s that a sticking out of this gent’s hessians ?’ ‘ Why,’ says the constable, ‘ it’s a spoon !’ ‘ Yes,’ says I, ‘ and it’s my spoon, and I give this gent in charge for stealing it !’ ”

Richard yawned, and asked for the paper again.

“ Yes, sir, it’ll be disengaged in a minute. Well, as I was a saying, says I, ‘ I give this gent in charge for stealing it !’ But just as I said it, who should come up but

one of my best customers, an old military gent, in the Indey House. ‘Hullo!’ says he, ‘why, what’s this, Charles?—What’s the matter, captain?’ And he tapped the old gent in the hessians on the shoulder, and looked at the policeman and me in astonishment. ‘Why,’ says the old gent, pointing to me, ‘this rascal charges me with stealing a spoon! He takes one out of my boot, and says I put it there!’ ‘Oh nonsense!’ says the Major. ‘Won’t you take my word, Charles, that this is a mistake? This gentleman *is* a gentleman! served with Napier in Scinde—was with Sale at Jellalabad!—How could *he* steal a spoon?’ ‘Well,’ says I, ‘if you say so; but I’ve lost a great many spoons lately!’ ‘I do say so!’ says the major, ‘And bye-the-bye,’ says he, ‘just such an accident happened to me at Whang-ho! I carried away a chopstick from a Mandarin’s dinner-table, and never knew anything of it till the next day, when I put my hand in my coat pocket, and found it

among my Trinchinopolis ! I'd advise you, however, Charles,' says he, ' to apologise to the captain ; and as for you, captain, have your hessians made tighter !—your calves aint so good as they were, old boy !' ”

The waiter paused for comment ; but there was none. Richard's mind was absent, wondering what had brought Blanche to London, why she had not written to tell him of her coming, and brooding with dull dissatisfaction over the scene in the Academy. He was only startled when the waiter, putting his hand suddenly to his forehead, felt in all his pockets, shook himself, stepped briskly to the recess, and returning with a letter in his hand said,

“ This is for you, sir.—Come yesterday—I quite forgot it.”

The letter bore the Maldon post-mark : it was from Blanche.

CHAPTER V.

RICHARD MALDON rose so early the morning after he received Blanche's letter, that the head waiter mistrusted him ! The man's mind ran continually upon the loss of silver spoons, and other articles of value. Had he been called upon to say what was his heart's dearest anxiety, he would have replied—plate and linen ! So he watched Richard's movements with great interest, and when he found an opportunity, slipped out of the coffee room, and whispered to the chambermaid :——

“ No. 15. He's out of his room ! Just

run in, and see if his portmanteau's there !”

The maid returned.

“ Well ?” said the head waiter.

“ It's there !” replied the chambermaid.

“ Stones ?” asked the head waiter.

“ No. Shirts !”

The anxiety of the man was somewhat quieted. He returned to the coffee room.

“ Going out early, sir !” he said.

“ Yes,” replied Richard. “ Am I too early for breakfast ?”

“ Well, sir, a trifle, I fear. But in a few minutes, sir. What will you take, sir ?”

“ I'll breakfast out, or when I return !” said Richard, —and he left the hotel.

It was early for London : the church clocks had just struck six. It was a dark, dull, morning, too, for the time of year. But the streets were unusually crowded : all the vagabondage—male and female—of the metropolis seemed to be gathering together, and making for a particular spot. As this human tide flowed past Richard, he now and

then caught a word or two that gave him a hint of its destination, and the occasion that called it forth; and at length he heard a complete dialogue, which let him into the whole secret! Two women, walking side by side, stopped at a point where the crowd appeared to separate and break into unequal portions:

“Aint you goin’ to the fire, ’Liza?” said one.

“Fire! No.—What is there in a fire? I’m goin’ to see the man hung! You’d better come, too. What is there to see in a fire?”

“Oh I saw the last man hung!” said the first speaker. “I’ve seen half a dozen! If it was a woman, I’d go!”

“Ah! I dare say you would!” was the reply, “I wish it was a woman myself!—Good bye!”

And the two friends separated.

Richard now had his choice of entertainments. He chose the fire,—and hurrying

on with the crowd, soon approached the scene of disaster. A dense black vapour was floating about; the air was thick and suffocating. Now and then a burst of pale, bright sparks drifted along for a moment, and blackened and fell on the house-tops or the ground! A hundred windows were thrown up, and fearful, awakened creatures looked out timidly into the street, and up to the sky, and then drew back their heads and thanked God that they were out of danger! And now a bright red vehicle, swarming with sturdy men, carrying glittering axes and capped like warriors of old, dashed along the crowd-encumbered streets! But even above the tearing rattle of the wheels, rose the desolating cry—"Fire! Fire!" A thousand idle voices took up this cry, and helped to increase the terrible uproar!

Richard went with the great human stream that closed up and followed in the wake of the engine, and at length found himself at

the scene of disaster. Water was flowing freely about, and the ground was already trodden to the consistency of a marsh. Long trails of hose were lying here and there, with strange pulsations agitating them; and some that led directly to the danger were heaving and swelling like great veins as the water rushed through them! A rude song burst upon Richard's ear: it came from the men who laboured at the engines: they tuned their strokes to it! And now across the housetops those helmetted figures clambered their uncertain way. They were bold, gallant fellows: God preserve them in their dangerous duty!

It was, indeed, a fire!—fierce, devouring, and unsubduable! For the time, it was confined to a huge workshop, seemingly full of inflammable materials and in the midst of a ghetto of crowded lodging houses. Out of this workshop the flames belched as from a great crater, roaring so that the many-tongued crowd seemed merely to whisper!

They carried with them huge splinters that split with a sound like the sharp crack of a rifle, and fell in a thousand bright fragments; they hurled far into the distance huge bundles of paper that burnt like meteors as the wind drifted them, and at last fell scattered, a mile away!

The fire began to spread: it was not satisfied with the workshop, but must bring those miserable houses behind, before, and on either side of it, within the circle of destruction! The raging element soon wrapped them in its terrible embraces, soon hissed and curled round their dingy wretchedness; and shivering the glass windows to a thousand fragments, leapt into the devoted rooms and licked the walls and laid the whole in ruin! But what of that? There had been warning enough and there were no lives in danger.

None! Ah, that cry!—that feeble, child's voice, rising thin and shrill above the roaring of the fire, the beating of the engines, and

the confused murmuring of the crowd! No lives! Richard looked up at one of the windows about which the flames were just feeling their way, and there, surely enough, horribly visible in the rich red glow, was a child's face, looking down appealingly to the crowd!

Richard possessed a quality rare in the streets, and that is—presence of mind. This sometimes enables Tom Thumb to effect more than Hercules! There was a ladder lying idly against a house adjacent. He ran to the place, had the ladder put on the shoulders of two stout fellows, and brought to the house. Who was to mount it? The crowd was courteous, and deferred to Richard. The firemen were too few for their duties; and in another minute the flames would dart through the cracking windows into that room! So up he went, dashed his arm through the window that as yet was safe, unfastened it, and scrambled into the apartment. As he entered, something

fell heavily to the ground. He stooped, caught it in his arms, and in another moment was seeking with what care he could for a footing on the ladder!

Oh what a shout rent the air when Richard was seen to do this! Even the engines for a moment ceased to play, and the labourers at them paused in their work, took up the shout, and their rough, dirty faces paled and flushed with fearful admiration! Then the voices were hushed, and there was the dead silence of suspense. One, two, three!—a thousand hearts were for the time pulseless!—till another great shout rose up, and the peril was over!

The fire raged on, and the crowd grew more dense. About Richard and the girl he had rescued, a thousand idlers pressed, eager to feast their curious eyes upon the two wonders! When the child—for she was little more in size, though perhaps more in years—grew conscious, she looked about her, started from Richard, and cried,

“ My mother !—Where is my mother ?”

“ Was she in the room with you ?” asked Richard.

“ Oh yes !—she was ill in bed ! Where is she ?”

Then Heaven help her !—thought Richard.

At that moment, a warning cry was raised ! The crowd swayed back like a wave, carrying Richard and the girl with it. The great wall of the workshop was tottering ! But it fell inwards !—and all that remained of Mr. Tympan’s printing establishment was a heap of charred and blackened ruins !

A feeble old man had for some time been standing near Richard, laughing hysterically, muttering the name of Mr. Tympan, and apparently enjoying the progress of the fire. When the great wall fell, the old man uttered a louder exclamation of joy, and then Richard, turning round, saw that it was William Grey !

“ I beg your pardon, sir,” said a tall, thin, person with spectacles. “ But will you favor

me with your card, and will the little lady give me some few particulars of herself and her history?"

"For what?" enquired Richard.

"Public purposes, my dear sir," said the man, blandly. "The public likes to hear of its heroes; and for a trifling consideration—a small sum per line of intelligence—I enable the public to do so. It's a long time, sir, since we've had so good a fire as this! I believe there are upwards of a dozen houses damaged, exclusive of the well-known and old established premises of Mr. Tympan, who, I am happy to hear, is insured in the Phœnix. You haven't heard, I suppose, if there are any lives lost, or any bodies struggling in the ruins?"

"No!" said Richard.

"Hum! — we're always glad of that; though I may say it is decidedly antagonistic to our interests. A mere fire, sir, is here to-day and gone to-morrow; while bodies in the ruins are matters of more permanent

attraction ! May I request the favour of your card ?”

“ I have none,” said Richard, impatiently.

“ Then your name ?”

“ Smith.”

“ And profession ?”

Richard passed on without reply ; but the reporter had his revenge. All the late editions of that day’s paper contained a long account of the fire, and an episode in which a “ mechanic” of the name of Smith played an important part. Had Richard been polite, the line would have stood—“ a gentleman of the name of Smith !”

With his companion clinging confidently to his arm, Richard, after some slight objection on the part of the crowd to release its hero and heroine, left the neighbourhood of the fire. The question then occurred to him.—What was he going to do with the girl ?—where was he going to take her ? He looked in her face to see if it could suggest anything ; but it was tearful and full of

alarm. Otherwise, it was a pretty face, lighted up by pale blue eyes, and shaded by a full fall of rich auburn hair. It had about it a refinement, too, that was not characteristic of the neighbourhood in which Richard had first seen it. But whoever the poor child was—whether gentle or simple—he felt that it was not within the scope of his ability, nor was it his duty, to protect her further. So he stopped suddenly, and having, as he thought, hit upon a happy idea, said,—

“Your aunt,—did she live in the street where the fire was, or in the neighbourhood?”

“I have no aunt!” replied the girl, bursting anew into tears.

“And your cousins, I suppose, live a long way off?”

“I’m sure I don’t know! If I have any I never saw them! Take me to my mother! What have you done with my mother?”

The tone of this complaint went to Richard’s heart, and he felt himself guilty

of a great omission. He had not saved the mother !

“ I cannot take you to her—at least, not at present,” he said. “ Is there no one else you know in London ? Have you no—no *other*—relations ? ”

“ No ! ” said the girl, bitterly. “ We don’t belong to London ; we live in the country.”

We live in the country ! — thought Richard,—*We* is of the past ! What life is there in the smoking ruins of that terrible room !

“ My good girl,” he said, “ you must forget your mother for a time, and go with me. You must —— ”

“ My mother is not—not—burnt ? ” exclaimed the girl, putting her head on Richard’s arm, and looking fearfully into his face. “ Oh, no ! don’t say she is ! Take me back to her !—take me back to her ! ”

Fairly exhausted by anxiety and fear, she

fell into Richard's arms; and he saw that there was nothing to do but to hurry her into a conveyance, and find temporary shelter. This he did. After recollecting and rejecting the parish workhouse—the proper place for the girl, as some persons would say—he drove off to the residence of the Greys.

When they reached there, the poor girl, who seemed still to have a clinging belief that she was being taken to her mother, followed her protector unresistingly, till she saw strange faces. Then she fell back upon Richard again, and sobbed aloud. A moment sufficed to explain to Mrs. Grey the unhappy circumstances of the case; and that good woman at once comprehended the peculiar scrape into which Richard had got himself. Mr. Grey, too, coming in at the moment to breakfast, and hearing the word “workhouse” whispered by Richard, at once settled the difficulty :

“No, no, sir—nothing of the kind! You

needn't have mentioned the place. It will be time for us to go ourselves when we send a poor child like that there ! No doubt we shall soon find her friends ; and till we do, I dare say we can find room for her here !”

So the matter was settled, but at some inconvenience to the Greys ; for—hospitable people as they were !—one of their parlours was already taken possession of by the expatriated Tom Jackson and his entire household !

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Sir Roger Maldon and his friends returned from the Academy, De Lisle was eloquent upon the arts. With the happy conceit of his nation, he estimated English efforts very poorly.

“ Confess that you have no painters !” he said triumphantly to the Baronet. “ Admit that you have no Claude, no David ! Say that you have not one great picture painted by an Englishman !”

This was said over the dinner-table, and just as Sir Roger was busy with his soup. Now, soup is a tyrannical dish, and requires

the entire attention of the man or woman who eats it ; otherwise there may be table mishaps. This, perhaps, was why De Lisle's posers were unanswered.

“ You are bad connoisseurs, too ; your taste is worse than your talent. If you choose or try to verify a picture, you are sure to make some mistake over it, or you commission a foreigner to do it for you, and so get taken in and pay dearly ! Looking down the list of painters who have been patronised by your kings, princes, and aristocrats, till the last century we find them to be Italians, Spaniards, or Dutchmen ! Why, in your own gallery, Sir Roger, there is but one English picture, and that is the worst of the collection ! ”

The Baronet had finished his soup, and was free to reply :

“ Monsieur De Lisle,” he said gravely, “ it has always been the will of England to be generous, and the fate of other nations to accept her charity. She has no need of

painters while there are so many hungry people for ever coming to her from all parts of the globe with paint-pots and brushes!"

Paint-pots and brushes!—thought De Lisle.—What a notion of art!

"But these painters were often men of condition, of family, sometimes of fortune!" he said.

"Then they disgraced their name, degraded their family, and should have lost their fortunes for descending to the condition of mendicants—beggars for work and wages!"

This was sufficient to stop any reasonable argument, so De Lisle said no more about painting till he saw that Blanche was unusually dull and silent:

"Do you grieve for the poor painters?" he then asked her.

A tear that had been twinkling in Blanche's eye now came visibly forward. She rose from her seat, and, with scarcely a word, left the room!

What was the baronet to think of this : Ah ! he had it !—Richard was a painter : he had come to London to paint ; and Blanche, knowing this, could not conceal the grief with which the conversation afflicted her ! A brother of *his*, then, handled paint-pots and brushes ! This was too bad ! nor was it improved by his sister's strong expression of feeling. Would she, he thought, weep for *him* if he were compromised by conversation ?—Would she start up and leave the table because a word or two had been said that might be construed to reflect upon *his* position ? He thought not, and therefore he began to dislike painters and paint-pots more than ever !

This love of Blanche for her brother Richard was always a sore point with Sir Roger. He thought that as he was the head of the family, he was entitled to the lion's share of its affections ! Besides, between him and Richard there was a discipline of coldness that had taken almost the

strength of enmity. They had never had an angry word together, but they had passed each other in silence, avoided each other, and were coldly polite when perforce they were obliged to meet. What right, then, had Blanche to form a secret and sentimental alliance with the weaker power?

This may seem strange; but it is not so. On the contrary, it is common in the world. Two collateral branches of the well-known family of Jones find occasion to quarrel, or to be cool, or to shun each other's society. Philo-Jones is of kin to both parties, and has no interest in the disaffection. He visits both. "My dear Philo," says the first Jones, "I shall always be glad to see you; I respect no one more than yourself! But why do you visit So-and-so? I have a particular dislike for So-and-so, and a man shouldn't blow hot and cold with the same breath!" * * * * "Philo," says the second Jones, "choose your society; settle your likes and dislikes; but you cannot con-

sistently sit at my table and at the table of So-and-so !” The result of this probably is that Philo-Jones deceives both the high quarreling parties !

The morning after the conversation recorded, it was the baronet’s fate to be inflamed still farther by his sister’s strange conduct. As soon as breakfast was over, she announced her determination to pay a visit, without condescending to state to whom ! De Lisle, however, tried to worm the secret from her :

“ May I accompany you ?” he asked.

“ Thank you,—No.” replied Blanche, firmly.

“ Ah !” exclaimed De Lisle, “ what romance is this ? Where is the cavalier !—why does he not come forward ? Oh, that it were permitted me to break a lance with him !”

The baronet frowned slightly at this speech. He thought it too free.

“ Do you go alone, Blanche ?” he said.

"Yes, I fear I must," was the reply.

Apparently indifferent, but actually exasperated, Sir Roger turned away, and changed the conversation.

"Let me see," he said, "what do we do to-day?"

"Vermicelli's concert is at three," replied De Lisle. "We are going, I think?"

"Oh yes,—by all means." And the baronet fell back in his chair, yawned, and talked idly till it was time to start for Vermicelli's concert.

In the meantime, Blanche made her way to the hotel from which Richard dated his letters. She went in a hackney-carriage, and directed the driver to make the necessary inquiries before she alighted. These inquiries brought out the head waiter.

"Mr. Maldon?—yes mum; No. 15. But he's out; went away without breakfasting. There's been a dreadful fire in the neighbourhood, mum; a whole street burnt down!"

“Indeed!” said Blanche. “And you cannot say when Mr. Maldon will return?”

“No, mum. He said he’d come back to breakfast, or he’d breakfast out. Now, which he’ll do, mum, I can’t possibly tell.”

“No,” said Blanche, “of course not.” She then leant to the window, to speak to the driver, when a printed broadsheet, with a neat illustration in the centre—representing a mere bundle of clothes hanging by a cord from a gallows—was thrust into her face, with a *vivâ voce* recommendation to the following effect:

“Full, true, and particular account of the life, trial, execution, dying speech, and confession of——. Only one penny! Have one, mum?”

Blanche retired to the further corner of the conveyance, to escape the bill and its vendor; when suddenly both disappeared, and in their place appeared her brother Richard!

“Just in time!” he said,—“I should

have been earlier but for an adventure ! Perhaps they can find us a sitting-room here !” And he went to the head waiter.

A sitting-room was found. It was a dull, dingy apartment, crowded with old furniture, and adorned with coloured pictures of white and red ladies with very long dresses and very short waists. They were mostly walking in gardens, carrying flowers, and petting unnaturally curved Italian greyhounds. When a gentleman intruded on the scene, he was thin, and feminine in feature, and wore a long-tailed blue coat and top-boots. It was only the difference in dress which made him a man at all ! On the sideboard there was a quantity of old—it might be antediluvian—glass, and on the table was a pair of massive metal candlesticks, holding tall and melancholy-looking wax-candles. What were they there for ? It was a dull day, certainly, but not dull enough to require illumination ; so Richard

removed the candles to the sideboard, to keep company with the ancient glass-ware.

Blanche had much to tell her brother, and he had much to tell her. Yet the novel was brought from the bed-room, and several chapters of it read with great earnestness.

“I have nearly finished it!” said the author, “A few weeks more, Blanche, and it will be complete; then, a few months, and I shall be famous!”

“Not so sanguine!” said the sister. “Remember the epic! That, too, was to make you famous!”

“Oh, but the epic!—What was that to this?”

Blanche sighed and smiled. Why was it that she could imagine the chance of failure, and even think failure more probable than success?—The question is soon answered. She was not an author!

A tap at the door disturbed the conversation.

“What now?” said Richard. “Come in.”

“A gentleman is waiting in the coffee room—a Mr. Grey, sir,” said a voice from the doorway.

“Mr. Grey! Shall he come here, Blanche?”

Blanche gave no denial, though she scarcely assented; but the conversation of yesterday came vividly to her memory, and reminded her that she was about to look upon one who, perhaps, handled paint-pots and brushes! Why she blushed, and let down the veil that a moment before was raised, must be left to conjecture. Certain it is, that when Gerald entered, she was closely veiled, and he could see only two bright orbs peering through the uncertain haze. Richard was foolishly boisterous about this:

“Why, Blanche!” he said, “what in the world have you covered your face up for? This is not Turkey; we are all Giaours,

you know ! Are you afraid of Mr. Grey's artistic eye ?”

This was worse and worse !—Blanche stammered out an equivocal excuse ; the artist changed colour—from mere red and white to pure red ; and the customary greeting was made more and more difficult. But, after a time, as is common in such cases, freedom of speech was established ; Blanche raised her veil, and Richard said :

“ We saw you yesterday. How busy you were ! What did you think of the pictures ?”

“ Oh !” returned Blanche, “ you saw me, and yet you were silent !”

“ Your attention was so thoroughly occupied. ‘ Julia and Don Juan’—you recollect ?”

Blanche blushed. What did that blush mean ? thought Gerald.

“ Where were you ?” she asked.

“ Riveted to the opposite wall. We were studying a very old subject by a very new hand—an allegorical picture, representing the green-eyed monster in the very act of

making the meat he feeds upon ! What with the picture, and what with your unexpected appearance, we were taken aback — our tongues deserted us !”

“ But my letter ?” said Blanche.

“ Oh, that was in the hands of the waiter here. I only saw it this morning. But, Blanche, I have something to request : you must give up one day to me while you are London !”

“ Oh, willingly !”

“ Very well,” said Richard, “ Don’t forget your promise. You hear it made, Mr. Grey ; and mark it well, for part of that day is to be spent in your studio ! There is a ruin there, Blanche, which you ought to know something about—a ruin so like the original that I have almost been tempted to pull the ivy from it, and to cut my name on the painted grey stone !”

During the greater part of this time Gerald had been silent. Now and then, when he was looked at, he smiled ; at other

times he was constrained and thoughtful. But when Blanche promised the day, and he was called upon to witness the engagement, he lighted up with wondrous alacrity ! Then it was time for Blanche to go, and she held out her hand to him. As he touched it, it trembled slightly. Oh for the days of chivalry, that he might have lifted it to his lips ! But those days were past, so the ordinary rules of civilisation must be observed, and one hurried gentle pressure suffice ! Then came :

“ Good bye ! ” — “ Good-bye ! ” And these words over, the vision was at an end !

When Blanche had departed, the sitting-room seemed dull ; but Richard determined to eat, drink, and be merry ! He would not hear of returning to the coffee-room ; but decided to dine where he was, and to dine sumptuously. Gerald, too, must dine with him ; and after dinner what could they do but sit and indulge in easy conversation over the best wine to be had in the hotel ?

This was not very good ; but it had its customary effect : it exhilarated the young men, and they talked fast and furiously. Gerald called for tobacco, and even tempted Richard to try his first cigar ! The result was that Richard grew artificially lively and wondrously well satisfied with himself.

“ Ah, I have not told you my adventure !” he said. “ Listen, my friend. At early dawn a bright gleam played about the heavens, and fiery specks were flying in the sullied air. I stood before a fire to which that of Vesuvius is but a rushlight ! I saw a human face—I heard a cry—I knew that life was in peril ! The crowd stared stupidly in confusion ; but I alone, etc., etc.—ran up a ladder and returned with a breathing burden ! In short I rescued a young girl from the flames, and as the fire made her an orphan, I stand, I suppose, in the position of her guardian ! Is that the proper way of telling a story ?”

•

“Admirable!” said Gerald. “And where is the heroine?”

“In the house of a poor but honest man, blest with a son who will one day make his line illustrious! Will that do?”

“Yes, go on. Who is the honest man?”

“Now I come to the climax. The honest man is your father! There’s a romance for you!”

“Capital!” exclaimed Gerald. And the young men, filling their glasses, drank and laughed, and laughed and drank, and forgot how very sad a story they were making merry over!

A first cigar is a terrible delight!

“Gerald!” said the neophyte, after an ominous silence, and when the cigar was about half smoked, “don’t you think these cigars are very bad?”

“No!” said the graduate, “Mine’s a capital one. “But if you think yours *is* bad, try another!”

“No,—never mind—thank you,—I dare—

say it's my fancy!" and the neophyte went on smoking.

What terrible moments were those for Richard! — What would he have given to escape from his companion and fling the cigar out of window without loss of dignity! But that was impossible! There sat Gerald, puffing away leisurely, and enjoying the smoke with all the ardour of a covenanted slave to the weed! In his extremity, Richard persevered: he would *not* be conquered!—he would, at least, smoke *that* cigar to an end. But what is human resolution! Gerald, ceasing for a moment to inhale the glorious fragrance, looked across to his friend. Richard's face was white—white as ashes! His eyes were staring stupidly at the candlesticks, and the half-smoked cigar was suffered to rub and bruise itself against the table!

"Richard!" said Gerald,—“what's the matter?”

But Richard, except by signs, made no answer.

Gerald, however, understood the signs. He rose from his seat, took his friend's arm, and carried rather than led him to his bedroom !

Half an hour afterwards, and when Gerald was about to depart, Richard, shaking his friend's hand, said—

“ That cigar must have been very bad, Gerald ! Good night ; come to me in the morning. And, Gerald, draw the curtain ! ”

CHAPTER VII.

VERMICELLI's Concert was eminently successful. Blanche, who was waiting to receive her friends when they returned from it, was glad to see that the morning's entertainment had improved her brother's humour. He said nothing at all about her visit; he asked her no questions; but sat down to dinner and said grace in a tone of voice that for him was wondrously complaisant. Usually his voice was stern and haughty; and even when he asked a blessing on his meat, he did so in a manner that would have

ensured a denial from any human creature having the power to favour or disappoint him! But to-day he spoke in so mild a tone that his three auditors looked at each other and wondered.

Music hath charms!—What had Vermicelli done to sing the savageness out of the Baronet?

The dinner that day passed off happily. After dinner what would the ladies like to do?—where would they like to go?—asked the affable Sir Roger.

Marie was willing to go anywhere; Blanche was tired, and, if she might be excused, would stop at home.

“Then I will stay, too!” said Marie. “I want to be quiet for one evening. I have my letters to read and answer”—she looked uneasily at her brother.—“I have many little things to do. But the gentlemen can go. We need not detain them.”

“Oh, very well!” said De Lisle. “Shall we take advantage of this permission?”

“ If your sister wills it so !” said the Baronet, gallantly.

“ I do !” said Marie, giving Sir Roger a smile, more forced than natural. “ But take care of yourselves. Don’t get into mischief.”

The gentlemen smiled, as of course, at this precautionary speech ; and, after many mock promises, sallied forth.

“ Where shall we go ?” said De Lisle, as they left the hotel.

“ Suppose we go—suppose we go—to the theatre ?” said the Baronet, speaking slowly to see whether the idea seemed odd.

“ Yes,” replied De Lisle. “ And which theatre ?”

“ Well, there’s one in the Haymarket.”

“ Ah ! Vermicelli sings there ! They play a piece expressly for her !”

“ Indeed !” said the Baronet, apparently indifferent. “ Does she ! Well, we may as well go there as anywhere else !” And so they sauntered to the theatre.

There was just one private box vacant—one that was almost on the stage, and led to the wings; and into this box the Baronet and De Lisle were ushered. The manager was very polite; he had been made acquainted with the quality of one of his guests, and he saw that both were distinguished looking men.

The first piece was just over, and the second—in which Vermicelli was to lift up her voice—about to commence. The curtain drew up,—there was a village scene, with a cottage in the foreground, vines all about, and a practicable bridge in the distance. Over the bridge came a troop of men and maidens—the inhabitants of this happy Paradise! They all carried flowers—artificial ones—in their hands or their aprons, and these they strewed wantonly on the floor. Then the men laid themselves down lazily on one side, and the women laid themselves down lazily on the other. Then they were all supposed to go to sleep; and,

as a necessary part of the delusion, some of them shut their eyes !

Sir Roger Maldon and his companion had excellent opportunity for observing this sleepy peasantry. Looked into closely, and under the searching glare of gaslight, what miserable, worn, and ill-grained creatures they seemed ! Not all the paint and powder in the world could hide the fact that they were not happy peasantry, but poor, half-starved units of an urban population, who eked out their scanty earnings during the day by equally scanty earnings during the night. And all that gaudy tinsel about them. How poor it seemed ! — how it mocked their thin, anxious faces, and the strained attention with which they watched the ballet-master, who was swearing, frowning and gesticulating at them from the wings !

And yet how different appeared these people to the delighted deities of the far-off gallery, even to the groundlings of the distant pit, or the confused mixture of fashion

and free-list in the boxes just above ! To them the stage was crowded with happy peasantry ; alive with Corydon and Phillis, Damon and Chloe ! They saw few of the lines and wrinkles, sunken eyes and fallen cheeks, that were revealed to Sir Roger and De Lisle ! They detected little of the mending, patching and piecing that those picturesque dresses disclosed to nearer eyes ! They knew not of the writhing, wriggling and shifting of the villagers that they might fall in with the notions of grace entertained by the authority behind the scenes ! Neither did they conceive that among those villagers themselves hard and awkward words were freely scattered, upon slight provocation, and that after dancing and sleeping together in so amicable a manner, there would be some among the ladies ready to scratch each other, and some between the gentlemen who would talk of pulling noses !

But from that box on the stage all these facts and probabilities were visible ; and

Sir Roger was relieved from an unpleasant feeling—nay, he was exalted from Tophet to the seventh heaven!—when Vermicelli—bewitchingly dressed, and the loveliest woman of her day—bounded over the practicable bridge and came tripping to the footlights!

She acknowledged the rapturous applause of the audience, she looked with more than usual grace towards the Baronet's box; she turned round, smiled upon the happy peasantry, and seeing that they slept—though half of them were staring at her with all their might—she was impressed with the necessity of keeping silence, and therefore—she sang!

What poppy or mandragora — what drowsy syrup—had those villagers swallowed that, while Vermicelli indulged in that lofty screaming — while she hung upon that wondrous note for which she was famous—did they not wake? Why, when the whole house was roaring applause, and kid gloves were flying to ribbons, did they not even

turn over, rub their eyes, and look about them? Instead of this, one of the *pay-sannes*, gazing fiercely at her neighbour, pulled her dress suddenly from beneath the other's foot, and said, loud enough for the Baronet and De Lisle to hear—"Get off, clumsy! Who do you think's to pay my washerwoman?"

There was little plot in the piece: it was only put together to suit Vermicelli. There was a frightened tenor who came on to sing with her; a basso who came to sing at her; and a feeble feminine creature with a lisp, who made a pretence of being her rival in love matters. But the tenor trembled while he did sing, the basso respectfully kept his distance, and the feminine creature carried herself like an Abigail. No,—it was all Vermicelli! And even in the last act, where the tenor had to take her hand, and warble out his ecstasies of possession; where the basso had to soften his frown; and the feminine rival to retire upon a rondo,—the

audience saw nothing, heard nothing, but Vermicelli—Vermicelli !

Foremost in shouting this name was a foreign gentleman, in a box exactly opposite the Baronet and his friend. Long after the body of the house had shown its wondrous lingual accomplishments by crying “ Bravo ! ” to a *prima donna*, this gentleman called general attention to himself by shouting—“ Bravissimo ! ”

“ Kreutzer ! as I live ! ” exclaimed De Lisle.

“ Kreutzer, indeed ! ” echoed the Baronet.

“ I’ll cross over to him ! ” said the French gentleman. “ He doesn’t see us. What’s he after, now ? Ten to one it’s Vermicelli ! I shan’t be a minute.” And De Lisle left the box.

There was a little round hole in the green curtain ; and when the Baronet was left alone, a brilliant eye that had been looking through the orifice, disappeared from it and left the point of observation for other and

inferior orbs. A moment afterwards, there was a tap at the box door which startled Sir Roger. The door opened, and lo ! the intruder was Vermicelli !

“ Ah ! ” said the voice that had just delighted the house, “ Have we met again ! I thought I recognised you, this morning. How good of you to come to night. Who was the tall, black-eyed lady with you at the *matinée* ? I know her face. I have met her somewhere before ! ”

“ Oh, a French lady of my acquaintance ; a friend, nothing more. But why are you Vermicelli ? Who gave you that name—that voice ? Are you not still Fran—— ”

“ Hush ! ” said Vermicelli, putting her finger to her lip, and sighing audibly,— “ I am now what you see me. What I was, I must forget. You have forgotten, too, I dare say. Are you married ?—going to be married ? Was not that the *fiancée* on your arm this morning ? Well, no matter ! Good bye ! ”

“ Stay !” said the baronet. “ But one moment !—Fran——”

There was a shuffling of feet by the door ; and the baronet’s appeal was vain. As De Lisle and Count Kreutzer entered, Vermicelli departed !

The foreign gentleman who came with De Lisle was foreign indeed. His face was very generally covered with hair, and his coat with frogs ; he sparkled with chains, rings, and pendulous articles of jewelry such as have now become common even among Englishmen. His trowsers had a military cut, and were braided down the legs in a way that was then a wonder to Bond Street. But for all this, he was a mild-looking, gentle creature, of delicate mould and with fine, feminine features. He shook the baronet familiarly by the hand, and then almost breaking out into another “ bravisimo !” said,

“ What a charming creature is Vermicelli !”

“ Very charming !” replied Sir Roger, uneasily.

“ What a foot !—what an ancle !—what a face ! what a voice !” continued the count.

“ And yet I hear, she’s as cold as an icicle, and can frown like Medusa !”

“ Pshaw !” said De Lisle.

“ I tell you it is so !” replied the count.

De Lisle smiled sarcastically :

“ Well, *I’ve* seen her before, I wish I could tell where ! She was not a singer then ; so I suppose she made a *faux pas* ; and as private society threw her up, she took to public !” —

During this conversation, the baronet was greatly agitated. He turned from his friends, and pretended to occupy himself with the audience.

“ What shall we do now ?” said De Lisle, touching him on the shoulder. “ There’s nothing bearable here, after Vermicelli !”

“ Ah !” said the count, “ What shall we do ? This is not Baden. Your government

is always so careful or so careless. A gentleman who wishes to amuse himself here, must risk his liberty, perhaps his life."

They left the theatre, and sauntered into Saint James's Street. As they passed a sober, respectable-looking house, the count gazed curiously up to the windows.

"A friend of mine," he said, "whom I left two weeks since on the Rhine, told me that whenever I was at a loss for occupation in London—and that would be very often!—I might call at this house, and present his card. He gave me a card for the purpose. Here it is!"

Both the gentlemen addressed looked at the card.

"Why not present it, then?" said one.

"Ah! why not?" echoed the other.

"Well, why not?" said the count. "Do you wish it? Mind, I know nothing of the place. There may be danger!"

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the baronet.

"Well, I give you warning!"

“Count!” said Sir Roger. “There are two things I never took in my life, and never mean to take—the one is, advice, the other, warning!”

The three gentlemen ascended the steps of the sober-looking house. The door was opened, and the card taken from Kreutzer. The man who brought back the card, made a low bow to the count, and led him and his friends onward. They had to pass a second door; even a third, and then, they came upon the inner mysteries.

They were in a large and brilliantly lighted room, curtained closely, and chiefly occupied by an oblong table, covered with green cloth. This table was some six yards in length and three in width, and on each side of it, at the centre, sat a croupier overlooking a heap of gold and notes. At about eighteen inches from either side of the table were two patches—one black, the other red; and on these patches were the stakes of the players. The croupiers were

dealing to the patches; then raking the money from them, and adding it to the heap, or passing money from the heap to the patches. Round the sides of the room were console tables, and plate glass mirrors, the tables supporting wine and dessert; the mirrors bordered by rich curtains, and thrusting forth glittering sconces. Lying about here and there were two or three backgammon-boards which were poorly patronized; and in the centre of the apartment blazed a huge fire, certainly not wanted for warmth. Some few gentlemen were seated at the great table; others talked in isolated groups, while three or four, perhaps, found occupation in lonely musings. The wine was much sought after; the dessert scarcely touched. Nervous players were startled now and then by the popping of champagne corks. As a player lost or gained so he drank—wildly or warily. The winner smacked his lips over the wine, let it gurgle pleasantly down his throat, and replaced his

glass carefully ; the loser drank the wine like water, refilled again and again, and not unfrequently smashed the glass in returning it !

A benevolent looking, bald headed old gentleman, wearing gold spectacles, and taking a large quantity of snuff—a man born to puzzle Gall and Spurzheim—sauntered about the room. He had a nod for everybody, a smile for most people ; and he was cleanly shaved as an alderman. Had you met him out of his present society—you would have said :—That man is a rector ; he has a rich glebe, and remunerative tithes ; he drinks old port, and takes his ease ; after dinner ; a lean curate does his laborious duties.—And five years before, facts would have borne out your suspicions. Then, he was a rector ! He preached occasionally to a thankful congregation, had a good house, kept a capital table, and was served by men and maid servants. But one of the latter charged him with unclerical behaviour. So

he was sequestered; he lost his gown; and now we find him overlooking twenty or thirty gentlemen congregated about a *rouge-et-noir* table!

The baronet took his place by the black patch; a lean old man being his companion on the red. This old man was shrewd and sharp-featured, with a dead-looking discoloured skin, hanging about his face like drapery! His eyes glistened, and his hand shook, as he staked—only one sovereign! The croupier was disgusted. The baronet put twenty pounds on the black; and the croupier dealing to it thirty-three, cried “Three!” and dealt to the red:—Ten—five—ten—five,—and the withered old man looked eagerly for the coming card,—and chuckled when it fell down an ace! The croupier pushed him a sovereign, raked up the baronet’s twenty pounds, and the old man departed.

“Curious old fellow that!” said one of the punters. “He cant keep from the

table, and yet he's frightened of it. He couldn't sleep unless he'd staked his sovereign!"

The baronet played on, and the bank profited by him. "Thirty-one après" was constantly turning up! Thirty-one après was chance in favour of the establishment—the exact number that suited the *ci-devant* rector and brought him his profits. The count and De Lisle played, too; both carefully, and like men who wanted sport for the little money they had to lose. The baronet staked his twenties, his fifties; they confined themselves to threes and fives. At last they were tired, and prepared to leave the place.

"Stay!" said the *ci-devant* rector,—
"There's something wrong! There's a noise down stairs! Hark!"

He opened the door gently, and listened. There was a hammering and crashing below, and from thence came a man, with a white face, and fearful as Macbeth's messenger.

"The police! the police!" he said.

The rector dashed in among the players, swept the cards from the table, and flung them into the fire that was ready for their reception. The croupiers raked up the money, and the punters turned ghastly as ghosts! All but Sir Roger Maldon. He stood calm and unmoved, coolly watching the rector's proceedings and listening to the noise below. Even when the lights were put out, and the rector said

“This way, gentlemen! There is no escape by the door; but by the window”—

Sir Roger Maldon did not move from his position. To De Lisle, who called to him in the darkness, he replied,

“Never mind me! I'm not good at climbing! *Sauve qui peut!*”

In a few minutes, the police were at the door opening immediately into the gambling saloon. They hammered, they shouted, they called for admission in the queen's name; the physical appeal was the successful one, the door gave way, and the officers

entered. They were unprepared for darkness!—they groped about, turning a lantern here, a lantern there. It was then that Sir Roger Maldon, and those who remained with him, advanced to the escape! Two officers who stood in the doorway were bruised and hurled aside. Two more, guarding the second entrance, were similarly discomfited; and at the outer door, where there was no obstruction but a curious crowd, the baronet pushed his way past man, woman, and child, at a decent distance took to his heels, and at last gained the refuge of a cab!

CHAPTER VIII.

FOR the first few hours after the departure of the two gentlemen, Marie and Blanche devoted themselves seriously to their several occupations. One read her letters, and the other employed herself in a way that will be well understood by ladies who watch their own wardrobes, not trusting solely to Mrs. Honour and Madame Mantilini. But when Marie laid down her pen, and Blanche sent away her last bandbox, what were they to do? They could not talk politics; they could not—at least, two women seldom do—play at cards; neither of them were story-

tellers, neither singers; and it was much too early for them to go to bed. What amusement have ladies when there are no husbands to fondle, no children to nurse, no bachelors to talk to, no album to turn over, no piano to play, no great demand for fancy needlework, and few female friends to pull to pieces? What is Desdemona's occupation in the day-time? How does Lady Macbeth employ herself when Duncan is well and awake? A philosopher of considerable private notoriety has remarked that everybody must do something! What, then, were Marie and Blanche to do when left to themselves in the cold comfort of a London hotel? Somehow or other, it came into Marie's head to talk of love, probably because she had been provoked to it by the last new novel, perhaps because she had some more important object in view.

"When," she said, flinging away the book she had just taken up—"When will men and women tire of nonsense like this!

Here, from the first chapter to the last, from the beginning of volume one to the end of volume three, are two people possessed solely by an absurd idea: Julia is dying for Julian; Julian cannot live without Julia!"

"Well," said Blanche, smiling at her companion's vehemence, "Why not?"

"Why not! But you have not read the story. You have not gone through these lovers' amazements. Now, I'll recite it to you. Julian is poor, Julia rich; a woman of fortune flings herself at the feet of the gentleman; a score of lovers, well-born and well-furnished, are begging for the hand of the lady. Julian refuses the woman of fortune, Julia turns her back upon the score of lovers. The one hugs his poverty, the other her maidenhood, through a world of difficulty and a sea of parental reproaches, only to find reward when the man is soured and the woman wrinkled!"

Blanche looked wonderingly at the

speaker, cast down her eyes, and was silent.

"Then," continued Marie, growing more and more bitter, "there is the other side of question—the concurrent plot, as it were. A weak, boyish simpleton meets a woman of the world, marries her clandestinely, and finds that she is not the angel he expected. This turns his brain, and, after a time, disgusts her with his simplicity. They part, and she goes out into the world, to take the pleasures that suit her. He follows, tracks her from country to country, and from house to house. Somehow or other"—and here Marie paused, and her eyes lighted up with a fearful, furious, expression—"he falls into close keeping, and becomes a confirmed lunatic! The woman has the world before her, but with no safe or honourable pathway. Whatever affections she may have had are scattered to the winds; but she wants a home and a protector! What do you think follows?"

Blanche still remains silent.

“ Shall I tell you? She meets with a man that in other days might have suited her; a haughty aristocrat who beckons her to him, and then plays the part of a trifler. In the end—but I have not followed *that* adventure far enough: the book disgusted me! What do *you* think of it? Why, you blush, you frown! Sweet innocent! what troubles you?”

“ The way,” said Blanche, “ in which you tell the story!”

“ Ah! indeed! Do I tell it too naturally? Have I offended your delicacy, or touched you nearly with the first part of the narrative? I ask your pardon; I should be careful; there may be a Julian waiting outside!”

“ Mademoiselle!”

“ Oh dear me!” cried Marie, following Blanche’s example, and rising,—“ Surely I have gone too far. Had I known that there was one heroine before me, I should have

hesitated before laying bare the feelings of another !”

“ You might have hesitated in any case before uttering such bold and unfeminine language !” said Blanche, moving to the door.

“ Bold and unfeminine !” exclaimed Marie, clutching Blanche’s arm,—“ Bold and unfeminine ! What other language would you have ? I use the language of the world ; and as surely as you live, when you have seen the world, you will use it too !”

As Marie uttered these words, the Baronet entered hastily.

“ Ah !” he said, “ Are you acting ?— You here, Blanche ; Marie there !”

“ Something of the kind,” replied the French lady, “ We have been following the plot of a stupid book ; and your sister, oddly enough, tried to realize the exemplary heroine ! But where is Auguste ?”

“ Has he not returned ?”

“ No. Why,—did you expect him to return—alone ?”

“ Well, yes, that is, no ! I fancied he might have been here ! ”

The Baronet's manner was confused ; for a proud man is seldom happy in excuses. Excuses are half-brothers, blood relations, to lies ; and pride that is not of the meanest gutter extraction, shrinks from lying. Fortunately, Marie was not in a mood to ask further questions.

“ It's late,” she said. “ I shall retire. Good bye, Julia ? Sir Roger, good night ! ”

“ And you had better follow, Blanche,” exclaimed the baronet. “ I will sit up for De Lisle.”

Blanche—at a respectful distance—did follow Marie ; and as they happened to occupy a double-bedded chamber, they met again that night. Marie was at the dressing-table, loosening her long black hair, and frowning at her own face in the mirror. When Blanche entered, she turned, forced a smile, and said,

“ Will you kiss me, Julia ? Come, forget

the book, and you shall be Blanche again !” And the cold ceremony of kissing was gone through.

When the morning broke, and one of the many maids attached to the hotel went about with the carpet broom and the dusters, she was surprised to find Sir Roger Maldon fast asleep in an arm chair, with an empty decanter before him. Her surprise was such that she dropped the broom, and swept down a piece of Sevrès with the dusters. This of course roused the baronet, who started up, crying,

“ Ah, De Lisle !—you’re safe, then !”

He saw his mistake, however ; and, after a cold shiver and a yawn, went up to his bedroom, changed his dress, and even at that early hour in the morning, sallied forth into the streets. At the quiet house in St. James’s, he stopped, and after a moment’s consideration, knocked at the door. An inspector of police opened it.

“ There was a disturbance here, last

night, I believe?" said the baronet. "A friend of mine may have been present. What gentlemen have you in the house?"

"Only two, sir: myself and A 1!"

"Two policemen, you mean!"

"Yes sir; gentlemen of the civil force."

"Then where are the *other* gentlemen?"

"I know very little about them; but one, I fancy, is in the hospital."

Sir Roger descended the steps, and went moodily to the hotel. There, he found his sister and Marie waiting for their breakfasts.

"How late you both are!" said the latter.

"Both?"

"Yes,—I suppose Auguste is just behind you."

"Not that I know of."

"Ah! indeed! What has become of him, then?"

"Oh, a mere adventure, I imagine. At any rate, it seems that we shall not have him to breakfast."

Marie was silent. There are many little

adventures happening, unfortunately, to young and men of all ages in London, that cannot well be explained to mothers, sisters, nor, indeed, to any of the gentler sex. There is a tacit understanding on the point: it is taboo. When Jones takes away his son's latch-key and threatens to expel him from the parental homestead for coming to it at six in the morning, Mistress Jones and the Misses Jones are satisfied with knowing that the boy did come home at six, and are, of course, scandalised at his conduct. But to save themselves from being further scandalised, they draw a line which separates general from particular inquiry, and are careful to keep from trespassing on the wrong side!

So it was with Marie. She must have heard of this understanding; for though she was reasonably anxious about her brother, she was not unreasonably inquisitive as to his affairs. On the contrary, seeing that something was wrong, and that the

baronet was dull and constrained, she essayed to turn the conversation and to find amusement :

“ Where do we go to-day ? Oh, I recollect,—we were to go to Richmond. When do we start ? ”

The baronet felt this to be a great relief ; for though he was in no mood for pleasure while De Lisle’s fate was uncertain, yet he felt that it was impossible to sit in a room with Marie and his sister, without betraying the secret of the previous night’s adventure, and so plunging one or both of them into grief. This consideration determined him : the carriage was ordered, a message was left with the *maître d’hotel* concerning De Lisle, and the three uncomfortable companions started for the loveliest spot in Surrey.

The old road to Richmond is known to everybody, and to very many it is familiar under more than one aspect. Before it was a long lane of houses—only broken near

the end of the journey by a mile of brick-wall and a parallel mile of hedgerow—it was refreshing and picturesque, and to traverse it was to take a country airing. The birds sung from its hedges, and the waggoners whistled as they plodded along its pathways. The posting houses were busy with life, and the humble houses of call, that have been swept from the centre of the road by the exigencies of to-day, had about them a crowd of country carts and dust-stained waggons. An old crazy barn here and there, or a tottering stile-house, recalled to the wayfarer's mind the fact that he was in a land ripe with the mellowness of age, and rich with the poetical associations of the Past! The road is somewhat different now. Where the hedges were, the bricklayers' villas rear their brazen fronts; where the birds sung, the piano is lavish of melody. The posting-houses have grown recluse and melancholy; and the waggoners have taken to a hybrid dress that makes

them nondescripts ! When we near the outskirts of the favoured village, we meet a calvacade of overburdened donkeys, and an inscription in the village itself tells us—or did tell us—that

“ An angel honour’d Balaam’s ass

To meet him on the way ;

But Bodgers’ troop thro’ Richmond pass

With angels every day !”

This old road appeared in the latter guise to Sir Roger and his two companions, who, after a course round the park, left the carriage and sauntered along the footpaths. They walked till they were tired, and talked till they had exhausted the only topic that seemed fruitful that morning—the deer. These timid animals came willingly to Blanche when she beckoned them by deceptive motions ; but, strange to say, when Marie offered them similar invitation, they kept at a distance which was more respectful than confiding. The result of this was that Marie whisked the nearest

one with her parasol, and the whole herd bounded away in alarm !

Returning to the carriage, the baronet and his friends came upon two students—one, as it appeared, a student of nature ; the other of books. The latter was lying on his back, reading lazily ; the former sitting up, taking in the features of a prospect, and transferring them to paper.

“ This fresh air does me good ! ” said the student of books, in an easy and musical voice. “ It was a happy thought of yours, Gerald, to come here. Oh that horrible cigar ! If anything could make me forgive Queen Bess for putting Raleigh in the Tower, it would be the recollection that the brilliant adventurer introduced to us the seductions of tobacco ! I wonder how he felt after *his* first pipe ! ”

Blanche started and looked in the baronet’s face : she knew the voice well enough ! But her brother apparently did not ; for as she was turning away to speak

to the students, he seized her sharply by the arm, pointed to the carriage, and said—

“Come! we have not a moment to lose. We may be keeping Monsieur De Lisle from his lunch!”

The old road was traversed again, and when the hotel was reached, a letter was handed to the baronet. He took it eagerly, opened it, and read as follows:

“MY DEAR SIR ROGER.—This is a sorry
“business. Here I am, shut up in a hos-
“pital—a policeman at one side of me, and
“a nurse at the other. In an adjoining
“place of the kind—so they tell me—is a
“fellow who, as the policeman says, is my
“‘victim.’ That rush by the window did
“it: it was a terrible affair! I followed
“the wrong man, I suppose, and half-a-
“dozen others followed me. It was a hasty
“scramble till I fell—I neither know how
“nor where—and I rose with my arm
“broken! However, I went on as well as
“I could, till I found myself in somebody’s

“ passage. I made a noise, perhaps ; at
“ any rate, I disturbed an old man who
“ came out in a bright red dressing-gown,
“ and screamed and ran to the door when
“ he saw me. I ran after him, thinking to
“ escape ; but the police were on the alert,
“ and my condition marked me. One of
“ the fellows struck at me, and hit the use-
“ less arm that was hanging by my side.
“ This was too much ; and as I mostly carry
“ a little instrument for dangerous occa-
“ sions, I used it, and the crowd cried out
“ that I had stabbed the man ! That is
“ all. Will you come to me—speedily?—
“ AUGUSTE DE LISLE.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE novel was completed. After getting various people cleverly into trouble, Richard Maldon had as cleverly got them out of it. With an unsparing hand he had castigated vice, and in a like measure had rewarded virtue. His true lovers were wedded happily ; his false lovers were married to misery. The bells rung out at the last, and the maidens strewed flowers ; ale was broached, barons of beef were badly cooked, morrice was danced, and bumpkins tumbled in sacks. And in a year's time from all this merriment, the good parents of the book were presented with grandchildren !

Byron has, in a sarcastic setting, immortalized Southey's modest address to a completed book :

“ Go, little book !—From this my solitude
I cast thee on the waters: go thy ways ;
And if, as I believe, thy vein be good,
The world will find thee after many days !”

Richard Maldon recollected meeting with these lines at the tail of that ferocious canto of *Don Juan* in which the poet lays down his literary commandments :

“ Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope ;
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey ;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy ;
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat drouthy ;
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rogers, nor
Commit—flirtation with the muse of Moore !”

But it did not occur to him to imitate Southey, and to think in a like unassuming way of his literary offspring. Far from admitting that “ many days” might elapse before his book became famous, Richard was convinced that the world would be at his

feet in a very short time after the work left the publisher's! It was the same with the novel as with the epic: he built great things upon it, and fancied that its few hundred pages of manuscript represented the first little landmarks of El Dorado!

Oh these dreams! Which of us, in some phase of life, in the heat of some high hope or earnest struggle, has not known them! Once you had a dream, my friend! and thought of ending your worldly pilgrim's progress greatly and gloriously. You essayed to clamber up a steep, on the summit of which was a land of less privation, penury, and pain—a land in whose rarer atmosphere the “chill of early poverty” might be warmed gently from your bones! You planted, perhaps, some little seed—wondrously like that sown by the boy giant-killer in the fable—and you watched its growth, and as its green buds of promise came above ground, the new life seemed fairly before you. But, alas! for want of the world's sunshine—

perhaps for some fault of your own—the buds withered away and the ground was barren again! Maybe, you wept, almost heart-broken, over that little grave of hope, and thought never to hope again! But you did hope again, and are still hoping, still dreaming of the promised land, and still striving for it! It is well you should do this, for honest hope is only a faith in goodness, after all!

So it was with Richard Maldon—except that to him, perhaps, the buds were bursting, and the fruit was almost ready to hand! He went to Gerald in high spirits:

“My boy!” he said, “the seed time is over, and the harvest approaches. In this small and apparently insignificant bundle, you see —— what do you see?”

“Open it, and I shall be able to give an opinion,” replied the artist.

“Come, come, Gerald!—no dry, matter-of-fact business-like answers!—no tradesman’s methodism over such a thing as this!

You know well enough what the bundle contains; and when I ask what you think there is in it, of course I want you to reply—Fame and fortune !”

“ Very well : Fame and fortune !”

“ Pshaw ! Gerald. You have but a magpie’s ability this morning ! Now, don’t, pray don’t, damp me :

“ My bosom’s lord sits lightly on his throne,”

and I shall hold you accountable for what may happen should he sit heavily !”

“ Very well ; I am silent. But what are you going to do with the work ? How are you going to dispose of it ?”

“ Can you advise me ? I came to you for advice of some kind.”

“ Why, you must take it to a publisher, you know, and ask for a perusal, unless”—and here Gerald hesitated, and spoke with some little delicacy—“ unless you propose to go to the expense of printing it yourself.”

“ To speak candidly,” returned Richard, “ I do not propose to go to that expense, for

the very sufficient reason that I have no money to meet it ! No ; I shall sell it out of hand !”

The artist gave every encouragement to this very proper resolution of Richard's ; and after a general review of the publishing world and the several merits of its loftier members, one of the loftiest was picked out as the purchaser of the manuscript. This being done, Richard left the studio, full of confidence, and taking the *El Dorado* with him, sought out the man of his choice.

In the meantime, Gerald turned to a picture that rested, face inwards, against the wall, and was somewhat carefully covered up from foreign inspection. This picture,—a mere conceit, a fancy, of his own—was very beautiful, but too dreamy and ethereal to be like anything in nature. As far as it was finished, it represented an umbrageous wood, conceived and sketched in the manner of the new school, and constituting such a bower as Oberon might have courted

Titania in ! The chief figure was a little girl—marvellously like Blanche—who was accepting flowers from an almost unseen hand, and smiling her sweetest at the mysterious donor. By a happy exercise of his art, Gerald had shed about the picture a dim, religious light that made the little lady look as though seen through a transparency, and gave her a delicate softness, somewhat unreal, but intensely beautiful. It seemed as though the artist had realised a dream ; and so he had ! The idea was conceived in a dreamy moment, and the brush was taken up, and the labour of love went on, and Gerald dreamt all the time !

The execution of this picture was a great secret. No one had seen it but the artist ; not even Richard ! Whenever Gerald heard the footsteps of a visitor, it was taken from the easel, and its fair face was turned to the wall. But one day, soon after Blanche's first visit to the studio, the artist's old patron called, carried him away from the very

heat of his labours, and the picture was left on the easel, and forgotten. Of course Blanche and her brother, having promised a second visit, chose that day for paying it. Richard used little ceremony, and, without waiting to ask questions, with Blanche on his arm, walked straight into the studio; when lo! on the easel, right before their eyes, stood the painted dream!

“Something new,” said Richard. “But, dear me! Blanche,—how very like—how very like—you!”

Quite instinctively, Blanche felt at home in the scene, and knew herself to be the little lady with the flowers; but the pictured reminiscence—so real, so poetical, so beautiful—made her heart palpitate and her cheek colour. Such, then, was the artist's occupation!—to that early and well-remembered scene did he devote his happiest energies! Yes; he had but just left the work: on one side was the palette, on the other the brush, hastily and carelessly laid

down. Blanche was softened to such sympathy with the artist, that she put her handkerchief to her eyes, and almost wept ! Gerald, Gerald, why not come now ?—now, when your lady's eye glistens, her heart beats with new delight, and her lips are shaped to utter the words—" I love !" On your knees now ! Alas ! alas !—the golden moment passes ; the lady grows conscious, and hears her brother's voice :

" Blanche ! Blanche ! what !—are *you* dreaming ? You recollect the scene, I suppose, and it calls up absorbing fancies. Well, the artist has caught your expression happily enough ; but what a misty, moon light cast the picture has ! The face, too, is scarcely yours as it must have been when you were a child ; but yours as it is now—refined, etherealised !"

" Yes," replied Blanche, with some confusion, but pretending to be cool and critical,—“ It looks like a dream, and might be expected to fade away as we gaze at it !”

“ The artist’s meaning, probably. Who knows with what feelings he painted it ! It may merely reflect his mind, in which, O Blanche ! how can he dare to engrave your image permanently ! ”

“ Romance writing has given you a romance tongue, brother ! You are taking the artist and myself for hero and heroine ! ”

“ Would that I might, Blanche !—would that I might ! For they, they, love each other, and will marry in the end ! ”

He took his sister’s hand as he said this, and looked anxiously into her face. How could she rebuke him ! Besides, in a lower and more melancholy tone, he continued :

“ And yet, perhaps, I am selfish ; perhaps while I talk of the happiness of others, I am thinking of my own. For I dread the time that will take you and your heart from me ; I dread the coming of that husband who some day—perhaps soon—will stand between us. I know he must—if he comes from whence I expect ! And so, Blanche,

you see, I may be selfish in wishing that one who is better than a brother to me, might be more than a friend to you !”

There were tears in the eyes of brother and sister as these words died away and left silence — oppressive silence — in the studio.

“ Let us go,” said Blanche, presently, “ I fear we have intruded !”

“ I fear we have. May we be pardoned !” And they went.

When, after some hours’ absence, Gerald returned, the landlady told him what had happened. He left her in the middle of the narrative, and rushed to the studio. There, surely enough, was the picture ! *Her* eyes had looked upon it—perhaps read the secret of its inspiration ! The confession had been begun : where, where, would it end ?

* * * * *

But a short time elapsed between Richard’s departure with the El Dorado, and his return. Gerald heard his footsteps,

and—though the existence of the picture was no secret now—the artist hastily removed it from the easel to its obscure retirement. Not a word had passed between the two men about it, and so Gerald chose to consider the subject sacred still.

“Well,” he said, “is the bargain concluded? Have you been successful in the first step?”

“No, not exactly,” was the reply. “They want time, they say, to consider, to read it. Ridiculous idea!—but I suppose its the way with these people. The clerks handled it as though it was mere waste paper; and one had the impudence to tell me ——”

“What?” asked Gerald.

“Why, that they had dozens of such things, which had been looked at, rejected, and were lying in a lumber-room unclaimed.”

“Hum! And when is your fate to be decided?”

“That again is uncertain!—a fortnight, or three weeks, or a month,—they could

not say exactly. Three weeks or a month! As though five minutes spent over the first chapter could not have settled their opinion!"

So far, the author had not met with what he expected. He had carried to the publisher a work of inspiration, and the myrmidons of trade had treated it as a commonplace matter of business, to be taken up, weighed, and considered when the ordinary rubbish of the literary world had had its attention! In short, in the very first step towards realising his El Dorado, the author had stumbled!

CHAPTER X.

THE year grew older, and the men and women of this every-day story passed their time much in the routine of the last few chapters. At the Priory, Lady Maldon was making strange holiday with her eccentric relations,—under the anxious eye of her doctor, and giving him, day by day, good cause for greater anxiety. Lord Dalton, after calling upon her ladyship, and hearing that the chief members of the family were in town, came to town too. He was to be seen now and then at the barracks, dining off the regimental mess-plate, playing at

the mess billiard-table, dropping into the Carlton, and occasionally doing that small modicum of duty which suited his tastes. He was losing his money at Tattersall's, on the gay race-courses of equestrian England, and in some other aristocratic haunts which need not be further specified. His mansion in Hanover Square was crowded with company, and his cards were delivered with due propriety in all the other mentionable squares and gardens within a mile of Mayfair. He was jostling the premier in Rotten Row, and talking to the whipper-in near the hall of the hereditary assembly that sits in the precincts of Westminster. It pleased him to hold chambers in the Albany, where, without the prying eyes of his dependants, he could enjoy himself and make his bachelor friends comfortable. He was behind the scenes at the opera-house, and now and then before them in a box which he had generously engaged for Mrs. Constable Overtaken. In short, he was seeing life in all

those phases which are at the command of the well-born and well-provided, and which many of us sneer at, some of us make war against, others struggle for, and all of us minister to!

Sir Roger Maldon and his friends were still at their hotel, leading a half-lively, half-dreary life, that somewhat tried Marie, and did not quite satisfy Blanche. De Lisle was still in durance, waiting for the sessions to deliver him, and crying out loudly against English institutions. The Greys were pursuing their humble path as usual,—happy in their new and unfortunate acquisition, and striving day by day to make her share their happiness with them. Their house was full, for the Jacksons were their lodgers yet; and their hearts were sound, for they exhibited no ungenerous desire to rid themselves of so unprofitable an incumbrance.

Drearily and sadly enough was Uncle William bringing his unhappy career to an

end! He was now something worse than a beggar, and his infirmities took him from hospital to hospital, from police-court to police-court, till degradation had become chronic with him. How he lived was a marvel; but a miserable cunning kept him from the only man in the world whose heart ached for his sorrows, and whose hand would have rescued him from his terrible way of life!

The artist, too, was fulfilling his mission with uniform and unqualified success: he had but to work, and the good things of life were ready to his hand. Not so with the author. He was dull, anxious, disappointed, and fretting childishly at the delay that retarded the realization of his hopes. He had heart-sickness early, and already he began to cry out upon the world and to tempt the Slough of Despond which yawned to receive him. The studio, however, was his resort. There he found cheerfulness, at

least, and might feast his eye upon the easy labours of a successful man ! The artist, too, afforded him the peculiar solace and support his wayward nature craved for, and was ever designing occupation and trying to make the hours pass lightly with him :

“ Come,” he said, once when the author was unusually dull, “ let us find something to amuse us during this long purgatory of yours. To-day, Mr. Grey makes holiday. Will you go with me, and take a part in his humble recreations ? Put aside your dullness, and say you will !”

“ I was just thinking of a duty I have to perform,” was the reply. “ You know I have burdened Mr. Grey with a charge. If I choose to play the hero at a fire, I should, at least, bear the responsibility of the result. As yet, I can hear nothing of Rosa’s friends ; and so Mr. Grey is the sufferer.”

“ Sufferer !” repeated Gerald. “ You mistake. You should hear them talk of

their sufferings! They would suffer, I believe, if you were to rob them of the 'burden' you allude to."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You should see them! Mrs. Grey laughs, and sings, and skips about the house, as though girlhood had come to her again; and as to Mr. Grey, he has almost given up his pipe, and taken, instead, to story-telling and playing at scratch-cradle!"

It was not from pride or false refinement that the artist used the words Mr. and Mrs. Grey instead of more familiar and endearing titles. He loved and honoured them with all a son's affection; but for the last few years the word "father" and "mother" had insensibly died away from his lips, and given place to a more formal mode of speech and to language suited, perhaps, for a higher sphere than that in which he included his parentage. He could not understand how this change came over him; but it did come; and, without the least affecta-

tion, he found himself using titles which sound well enough, perhaps, in one range of life, but which may raise a laugh if used in another.

“ You think, then,” said Richard, adopting his friend’s style of speech naturally, “ that Mr. and Mrs. Grey are not so sensible of their incumbrance as I am of having incumbered them ?”

“ Think !” repeated the artist, “ I know it ! They look upon Rosa, in some sort, as my successor ; and the only name you hear now in their house is her’s ! Going there the other day, I found them fully occupied with your *protégée* ; and when the usual greetings had passed, Mr. Grey turned to me and said, triumphantly pointing to her, ‘ There, Gerald ! do you think you could paint anything like that ?’ And Mrs. Grey replied, ‘ Of course not !—Gerald’s *only* a landscape-painter !’ Only a landscape-painter ! What do you think of that ?”

Richard was glad to hear these facts from

the lips of his friend: they relieved him from an unpleasant consciousness of having saddled the Greys with an irksome burden. The young girl he had rescued appeared to be utterly friendless, and all she knew of her history was that she had lived with her mother in the country till illness brought them to the house in which they were found in London. Her name, she said, was Rosa, and when pressed, she added—Fitzgerald. But as she burst into tears immediately after making these disclosures, she was troubled with no more questions, but allowed to take her place in her new home as an interesting mystery, not to be further fathomed until the great shock she had suffered should be cured by time.

It was tacitly understood, that Richard was to make all proper inquiries about her, and in due season to pay a visit to that part of the country in which she said her mother once resided. This visit

was the duty to which Richard alluded in his conversation with the artist.

“Come,” said Gerald, “let us be off! We shall be in time for the fun. There are some curious people at Mr. Grey’s, and I promise you entertainment, though of a lowly character.”

CHAPTER XI.

MR. GREY was seated at the head of his hospitable board ; that is, he occupied a place at his own Pembroke table, fronting the parlour window. He was attired with great magnificence. And first of his coat. This was of the old school—blue in colour, brassy in adornment, long in the tails, large in the lappels, high in the collar, and slender but lengthy at the cuffs. His cravat was rigid and unyielding, and his shirt had a frill and a brooch in the centre. His waist-coat was of plum-coloured satin, sprigged here and there with green embroidery ; and

his continuations—tight and short, perhaps, rather than full and flowing—matched the coat in cut and colour. Say that his hair was trailed luxuriantly about his head in wavy lines like vermicelli, and was without that longitudinal division to which modern nomenclature has given the title of “gravel-walk,”—and we have him complete. He had a portrait of George the magnificent over the mantelpiece, and it was one of his little vanities to believe that in full dress, and with his hair properly arranged, he distantly resembled the monarch.

Mrs. Grey followed the fashion of her husband, and, like him, was unusually adorned. Her dress was a happy compound of merino and white muslin—the latter making her comfortable at the throat, the former helping everywhere to set off a figure not wanting in grace and comeliness. But Rosa! she was the gem of the little assembly, and the chief object to be admired. How she was dressed, there is no telling; but,

her general appearance was white and fairy-like. She had flowers too, in her hair ; and at these flowers Mr. Grey was constantly sniffing, or pretending to sniff, and thus getting his snaky hair close to Rosa's auburn curls, and his broad, manly cheek in striking proximity to her delicate face !

At the table, too, sat Tom Jackson and all his presentable family. The man was sad and somewhat sullen ; for he had not yet found the occupation he came to London to look for. He was waiting for a gardener's place, or a bailiff's place, or indeed any place to which his limited abilities might entitle him ; and, in the meantime, he and his family were living upon the little money that the furniture of their broken-up home had produced. It was a long time before Tom could be persuaded to part with this furniture ; for to him it represented all he knew of household gods ! But after it was rudely thrust from his cottage into a cart, and then shot down in the market-place

and ordered off again, and then consigned to a miserable shed for safety, and then taken up, and shot down again—all this desecration, too, costing the poor man hard-earned money—he said, kicking the piece nearest to him,—“Dang it! let ’un go! Betsy my gal, it aint no use a keepin’ on it!” And it was sold for a song before his eyes!

It was at this critical period that Betsy—always a vigorous-minded, busy woman, making the best of everything and looking for a bright side to every picture—saved her husband from utter ruin, from taking to drink, as he threatened to do, or sitting idly by the road-side as, after the sale of his effects, he talked of doing. She laid her protecting hand upon the money they had; she kept Tom’s blood in wholesome circulation by making him dandle and embrace the children in due succession; recited to him all she knew of the vagrant act; and, in the end, brought him to London, and introduced him to Mr. Grey, as to one whose

example might do an idle and despairing man good ! Even now—after many weeks waiting and hoping—she was not cast down, but sat cheerfully at Mr. Grey's table, and added something to the hilarity which was the business of the day.

Her eldest son, Tom—of whom she was very proud, and whose career she watched with intense anxiety and apprehension—was seated near her. He was a great gaunt fellow, with a huge red face, Titanic limbs, and a fist that a pugilist would have been ecstatic over. The grenadier promise of his boyhood had been well fulfilled, and he was a man fit to frighten Slaves from the crest of a hill or dangle Hindoo miscreants by the waistband ! In his present sphere, however, his advantages placed him at a disadvantage. A small parlour is not the best possible place for giants to show in with credit ; and young Tom was made acutely conscious of this by his feet coming in contact with, and being as certainly repulsed

from, the feet of those about him ; by his head doing serious damage to the door-frame ; and by his arms sweeping from the table all light articles that were rashly placed near them. His hands, too, being, as has been suggested, somewhat large and weighty, took naturally to the table, and lovingly embraced each other till from their height and width they formed the chief feature of the neighbourhood !

“ My dear Tom ! take your hands off the table ! ” was Betsy’s constant admonition to her son ; and as her son wished, on this particular occasion, to be agreeable and even captivating, the admonition was not pleasant. Every time his mother used it, he blushed darker red, and cast down his eyes before the wondering, upturned glance of Rosa !

There were other members of the Jackson family present ; but they were not of years or importance enough to find a place in this history. It is sufficient to record the easily understood fact that they helped to crowd

the table, to make havoc with the viands, and to swell the general chorus when noise was the prevailing amusement.

It was the habit of this family, when its members met together for social intercourse to talk of what was nearest their hearts and most suitable to their understandings,—thus falling away from any ambitious imitation of families far above them. Small-talk they knew nothing of, and seldom practised. If they chanced to fall into it, they floundered, and felt themselves out of their proper element. They had not facts and scraps enough to keep it going, and they conversed with a sincerity which put its continuance beyond possibility. Their conversation was of themselves, their children, and the little difficulties and ailments of both; of the beef they were eating, the butcher they dealt with, the baker they intended to give up; sometimes of the murder yesterday, the suicide of the day before, or the robbery of last week. Upon all which subjects they

were fervent and sincere, and upon some they would have considered flippancy a crime! At the moment, their talk was of Gerald.

“And to think, now,” said Betsy, “that he should have grown so, and got on so, and become such a man! Oh how proud you must be of him!—shouldn’t I be proud of my Tom if he was to do as well! But I always said he was clever; you know I did—don’t you, Tom?”

“Oh yes,” replied Tom, gloomily, “a course I do!—you was always a sayin’ on it!”

“Well, it was just this,” continued Betsy, “‘I know,’ says I, ‘that Mas’r Gerald ’ll grow up to be something great and do something wonderful. He’s so thin, and so pale and thoughtful! And I’ve noticed,” she went on, in a reflective manner, “that thin, and pale, and thoughtful people always do something great!”

“Ah!” said young Tom, to whose intellect conversation was tempting but dangerous,—

“ that they do ! Look at that there man in the wax-work that I seed !—him as did the murder ! He wor pale ! ”

“ My dear Tom,” said Betsy, “ You misunderstand me. Doing a murder, you know, is not doing anything great ! ”

“ What did they put ’un in the wax-work for then,” asked the youth, triumphantly, “ wasn’t they all great folks as was put there ? ”

“ Some of them was, I dare say, my dear,” replied the mother, mildly, “ but not, you know, the murderers ! ”

“ Well, then, the murderers wor the palest ! ” exclaimed Tom, satisfied that he had the best of the argument.

And now a knock was heard at the door, and a whisper ran round the table. When it reached Rosa, she blushed deeply, and her eyes lighted up with unusual brilliancy. When it had gone all round, Mr. Grey felt himself at liberty to say aloud, “ That’s Gerald ! ”—and a moment after-

wards the artist—followed by Richard Maldon—entered the parlour.

Mr. Grey was surprised but delighted to see the second visitor. “ Ah ! Mr. Maldon ! ” he exclaimed, “ What an unexpected pleasure ! Here’s Rosa, here, jumping with joy !—aint you, Rosa ? ”

Far from jumping or, indeed, doing anything else with joy, Rosa was looking anxiously after Gerald, who had just dropped her tiny fingers and was busily engaged with the Jacksons. Young Tom, in his heartiness, had got hold of the artist’s hand, and was quite unconsciously subjecting it to severe compression. But when it was released, Gerald turned round ; and then he saw Rosa looking timidly at Richard, and giving him somewhat coldly the greeting he asked.

When Betsy first heard the name of Maldon, she was startled, and looked to Mr. Grey for explanation. But when she saw Richard, she was, indeed, abashed, and hang her head in humility ! How could

she sit down with one of Sir Roger's relations!—she who had always been accustomed to go before them curtseying and unbbonnetted; who had taken their wages, and lived in peasant fashion upon their lands! With a rapid glance at her family, she beckoned them all to rise, and with a vigorous push she swept her eldest son's hands from the table. Then, while her fingers grasped the corners of her apron, and the fingers of all her family sought their forelocks, she whispered to Mrs. Grey,

“ Hadn't we better go out ? ”

Mrs. Grey was very doubtful about the matter, for she knew in what relation the Jacksons stood to the unexpected visitor. But she temporized :

“ Sit down, and say nothing. We'll see.”

The Jacksons did as they were desired, till their turn came to be noticed by Richard. Nothing in the world could have kept them to their seats then!—had they been anchored, their cables must have parted ;

had they been glued, they must have given way as the hero did in the shades ! There was a magnetism about the brother of their late lord which was to them as the centre of gravity, and in the presence of which their locomotion was not their own ! Quite unexpectedly, then, Richard found himself before a whole family that persisted in showing themselves his inferiors ! He put them upon easier terms, however, with a few words :

“ On a visit, I suppose ? Come up to see the sights of London, eh ? ”

“ Not 'zackly, sir,” said Tom, pulling his hair, “ We're not 'zackly on a visit, 'cause we couldn't help comin' sir.”

“ No, sir,” interrupted Betsy, who was afraid of her husband committing himself, “ We're not unlikely to stop here.”

“ Oh, indeed ! ” said Richard. “ Stop here ! Well, London's the place to do well in. It has so many more opportunities than the country.”

“ Yes, sir, it has,—there be more opportunities, sartinly, sir,” replied Tom, thoughtfully, “ But you see, sir, everybody wants ’em !”

“ Ah ! true enough !” exclaimed Richard, thinking of his own case.

“ And then, you see, sir,” continued Tom, “ after being used to the country, it’s hard, sir, werry hard, to be obliged ——”

“ Tom, my dear, !” said Betsy, “ Mister Gerald’s waiting to speak to you !”

This—a pure invention of Betsy’s—effectually closed the conversation between Richard and Tom, and prevented the latter from laying before the unexpected visitor a complete summary of his hard case at Maldon. The countryman turned round to Gerald, said, “ I beg your pardon, sir ;” and although he had but just shaken hands with the artist, gave him as complete and vigorous a greeting as if he had been absent for years !

Matters thus settled, the original business

of the day was resumed, and the minds of the company, for a very sufficient reason, began to dwell upon Rosa. The eyes, too, of the company followed that little lady till she grew confused and fearful of making the least movement.

“How very pretty!” whispered Betsy, in a confidential tone, to Mrs. Grey, “And how delicate! But don’t you think she looks a little ill?”

“Well,” said Mrs. Grey, in the like low-toned confidence, “perhaps she does. But it’s her nature to be delicate. I don’t think anything would make her look hearty.”

“And how old might she be?” continued Betsy.

“I hardly know. She *thinks* she’s fifteen to-day; and she *is* something. It’s very curious how I found out that she was something to-day!”

“How?” asked Betsy, highly interested.

“Why, all through looking at the almanac for wet weather;”

“ Ah !”

“ Yes. Directly she saw ‘ St. Swithin,’
‘ That, says she, ‘ is my birthday !’ ”

“ Dear me !” replied Betsy. “ How very,
very, curious ! What strange things do
happen !”

It was a good trait in Betsy’s character, as it was in the characters of most of her family, that she gave kindly encouragement and applause to the most insignificant revelations that could well pass between woman and woman. She was always ready to be surprised for fellowship’s sake, and never received coldly whatever it was possible to put a note of admiration after. If she told a story herself, she liked to see it create a sensation ; and when she heard one, or an instalment of one, she was always generous enough to do unto others as she would be done by. Thus, while listening to Mrs. Grey, she expressed the greatest astonishment, though she was not much surprised ; and when Mrs. Grey had concluded, she

delivered herself of the words set down. Further, she continued :

“ A very peculiar child altogether ! There’s something about her that’s odd and strikes one ! I can’t explain myself ; but you know what I mean. She looks like——”

Mr. Grey had been listening to the quiet conversation eagerly,—“ A fairy ?” he suggested, with perfect seriousness and sincerity.

“ Ah, yes—a fairy !” repeated Betsy, “ that’s what I mean ; that’s what she’s like !”

“ I’ve seen somethin’ that’s like her,” said young Tom.

“ And what’s that ?” asked his mother, patronizingly, and cherishing a hope that her son was about to make up for his little mistake about the murderers.

“ Ah ! that’s what I don’t know !” replied Tom, “ But it wor in a barber’s shop—a turnin’ round an’ round like anythin’, and had a sight o’ people a lookin’ at it !”

“ Yes,” said Betsy, somewhat disappointed.

“What he means is that Rosa’s so pretty and delicate.”

“No, I don’t mother!—I don’t mean no such thing! I mean that she’s just like that there thing I told you of!”

“Yes, yes, Tom—you’re quite right. We understand you. It’s a peculiarity of my Tom,” she continued, turning to the company, “that you can’t get him away from anything he fixes his mind on. He’s wonderfully firm. And, do you know, he talks of goin’ and listin’ for a soldier! I hope he won’t be so firm about that!”

“And why not?” asked Gerald, regarding the young Titan, and thinking how well he would look as No. 1 of a grenadier company.

“Why not!” repeated Betsy, “Oh Mister Gerald! Wait till you’ve children of your own, and then see if you’ll like them to go for soldiers!”

The conversation was thus taking a painful turn when Mr. Grey rose and interrupted

it. The prime event of the day was now to come off: Rosa's health was to be proposed; and Mr. Grey, in the fullness of his heart, attempted to propose it.

"Fill your glasses," he said, in a somewhat tremulous tone, "and don't be afraid, because it's only ginger wine. Give the children a cake, as they'll want to do something when they see us all drinking."

Mr. Grey's commands were obeyed; the glasses were filled, and the children were duly attended to.

"I'm going," he continued, "to do something that I think ought to be done. You know what it is, of course?"

"Sing a song?" suggested young Tom.

"No." replied Mr. Grey, severely, "The songs must come afterwards. I'm going to propose a toast."

"A toast!" exclaimed the incipient grenadier, wondering why Mr. Grey stood at the head of the table to commence proceedings.

“Hush, my dear!” said Betsy, sweeping her son’s hands from the table again, and shutting his mouth gently for fear of the noise, “A toast is a health!”

“Yes,” continued Mr. Grey, passing sternly over the interruption, “I’m going to propose a toast; and I can do it better, perhaps, if Rosa”—and here he beckoned the little lady to his side—“will stand by me; because what I have to say is about her.”

Rosa went to Mr. Grey, and stood by his side, and looked up in his face, and wondered what he was going to say about her! He was so solemn and serious, and he talked so slowly, and stared so hard at the ceiling, that she was alarmed! Apart from this, too, the situation was awkward. It is always a serious matter for little people when they are made the subject of conversation before third parties. The prominence abashes them, and if they happen to be gentle, sensitive, children, they are not unfrequently

moved to tears. Rosa was simple and sensitive to excess, and it was not without terrible apprehension that she listened to Mr. Grey's solemn exordium.

"It is a providence," he continued, putting his hand on Rosa's head and playing with her golden curls, "that this little girl has lived to see another birthday. We have, I am happy to say, though I scarcely expected it, a gentleman present who had a good deal to do with her seeing it. You all know the story, and how she was miraculously saved; but you don't know——"

"Father!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, hastening from her seat, and putting her handkerchief to Rosa's eyes—"Don't you see how she's crying?"

"Crying!" repeated the husband, "Well, dear me! so she is. And I've made her cry! I ought to be ashamed of myself! Rosa, my dear, I shall only say one more word." And here Mr. Grey put the wine to his lips, looked at the company, said

“ Rosa !” and his example being followed, the toast was at an end.

And for that day, so was the hilarity ; for scarcely had Rosa recovered from her little burst of grief when voices were heard outside the parlour window :

“ Ah, this is the house. You knock Jack, and tell ’em about it gently—break it to ’em, as it were. You *can* do that sort of thing !”

The knock was given, and Mr. Grey went to the door.

“ My name’s Grey,” he said, in answer to an enquiry.

“ And you’ve a brother—havn’t you ?”

“ I have.”

“ And he’s a little——you know ?” and the questioner tapped his forehead significantly.

“ He may be,” replied Mr. Grey, his teeth set, his hands clenched, and every muscle of his face rigid.

“ Ah ! then, the people at the public

house were right: they told us to come here. We're watermen, and picked your brother up last night off Blackfriars: he tried to drown himself!"

"And where," said Mr. Grey, clutching at the man's arm, "is he now?"

"Oh at the station! He's going before the Alderman to-morrow."

"Good God!" exclaimed the brother, "Again!—again!"

And So Rosa's birthday ended sadly!

CHAPTER XII.

THE inspired Irishman who maintained that "single misfortunes never come alone," and who should have carried out his love for perfect truisms by writing a successful volume of "Proverbial Philosophy," might have called at Mr. Grey's humble establishment for the purpose of strengthening his belief in the Hibernian dictum. Single misfortunes were just now treading upon each other's heels there; for no sooner had Uncle William's terrible plight become known to his brother, than Betsy Jackson was plunged anew into mourning and des-

pondency. Though she was a great conqueror of troubles, and sure, after a time, to shake them off, and find a bright side to them, their first shocks overturned her philosophy, and left her a prey to evil anticipations. The ill-wind in its early vigour brought her to grief; and till she recovered her strength of mind, gloom was all before her. But a wholesome proverb bearing upon this ill-wind—a proverb that our energetic English hearts have made a household word—mostly came to her memory, and she accepted its solace and put its sound philosophy in practice.

We find her, however, in the first gush of this unkindly wind. While the Greys were grieving bitterly over their last untempered affliction, she was prostrated by the indiscretion of her eldest son!

“Tom, my poor boy Tom,” she said to Mrs. Grey, “has gone and listed for a soldier!”

“Well,” replied Mrs. Grey, soothingly,

“ There’s nothing so very sad in that. He’ll make a very fine soldier, I’m sure. He’s just the lad for it !”

“ Ah !” said Betsy, sobbing violently, and reddening her eyes with her apron, “ You’ve got a son that’s doing well, and that hasn’t listed, and that’s a blessing and a comfort to you ! You can talk like that ; but I can’t. It’ll break my heart, I know it will : he’ll never come back, and if he goes out to fight, of course he’ll be killed !”

“ But perhaps he won’t go out to fight,” suggested Mrs. Grey, “ He may stay in London, you know, and take care of the Museum, or the Queen’s palace, or the Tower, or something of that kind.”

“ No,” said Betsy, doggedly, “ he won’t ! He’s going away directly ; he listed to go ; and he’ll soon be in Indey,—and then I shall break my heart, I know !”

“ Never mind,” returned Mrs. Grey, giving Betsy a kiss,—“ Perhaps something

can be done—perhaps he may be bought off. He can be bought off, you know !”

“ Bought off !” repeated Betsy, bitterly, “ Who’s to buy him off ?—where’s the money to come from ? Don’t talk of buying, Mary, when we’ve sold all we had, and I’ve just changed our last sovereign. Bought off, indeed ! No, Mary, he must go—he must go !”

As Betsy said this, she assumed an expression of sullen resignation. Her apron fell, her hands dropped to her sides, her eyes were dry, and her aspect passionless.

“ I’ve kept up,” she continued, “ against a good deal, and I’ve had a good deal to try me. When all our things was sold, and we were all houseless, and Tom began to take to drinking, and threatened to strike me because I snatched the drink from him and flung it on the floor, I bore up, and only said—‘ Tom, things must mend—they won’t be like this long ; they can’t be, Tom !’ And I believed what I said, and hoped for

the best. But I can't do that now — I can't hope that my boy 'll come back ; I can't hope to see him alive and well again. Oh no ! — he must go to Indey, and he must be killed !”

She turned sullenly away, and went to her husband and the children. She sat down among them, and looked pityingly at their miserable faces. They were all—from the father of the family to the last imperfect likeness of the father—crying piteously. The latter ran to his mother's knee, clambered into her lap, reached her face, and there found the best handkerchief he knew of. From that moment Betsy began to reason, and to feel the responsibilities of her position. The brave maternal feeling was aroused in her ; she kissed the child, kissed all his brothers and sisters that were present, and, at last, walking right across the room, she twisted her husband's head round, and kissed him !

“ Betsy my gal,” he said, “ what are you a doin' of ?”

“ Kissing you ! Tom,” she replied, simply.

“ But what’s the good o’ kissing on me ?” he asked, wiping his mouth.

“ A great deal of good, Tom : it’ll make you more cheerful.”

“ No it won’t, my gal ! It won’t kiss the boy back agin, will it ?”

“ No, Tom, it won’t. But perhaps it will make us better able to bear his being away. Now you just give me a kiss, Tom, and I know *I* shall feel better !”

“ Betsy, my gal,” replied the reluctant husband. “ It aint no use : I shan’t !”

But the wife was in earnest ; she sought the stubble of Tom’s chin, and came off red and victorious !

“ Don’t fret, Tom,” she said, “ Perhaps it’s all for the best. When you come to think of it, there’s nothing so dreadful in being a soldier !”

This was the great turning-point of the whole grief. Following her advantage, Betsy found that the evil retreated, and the

good sprang up on either side of it. She recollected having heard of a soldier who came home safe and sound from India, had a pension, and was a hero for the rest of his life ; of another who, for a slight wound—a mere matter of carrying a musket ball in his abdomen for a few years—was advanced to the high dignity of a park-keeper, and so ended his days in the very lap of luxury ! Then, there were Tom's chances of promotion, of becoming a colonel or field marshal, and covering his entire family with reflected glory ! All these recollections and hopes did Betsy good ; and at length, the affliction was conquered and resolved itself into the fact that Tom was going on a four or five months' voyage, and that his family might not see him again for many a day !

The recruit, too, came to his mother in his regimentals, and spread out his bounty money before her astonished eyes.

“ There, mother, that's what I went and listed for ! ” he said,—“ I know'd that I

ought to be doin' somethin', and that father ought to be doin' somethin', and he aint ; and so you see,—you see—I—I—listed !”

This clever piece of diplomacy set Betsy thinking how good a son Tom was, and what kindness and consideration he had for his family ! From that, she took to admiring him, and extolling his appearance in the splendid uniform of the——Buffs. She led him to a looking-glass and helped to increase his vanity ; she stood on tip-toe and pulled his head down that she might kiss it ; and she encircled him with her arms in a fervent and affectionate embrace.

“ My dear Tom,” she said, “ I forgive you ; you're a good son after all ; and if you must go to Indey, why you must ! Only, do come back as soon as you can !”

Of course she became terribly proud of him, and watched him about, and wished to monopolise the little time he had to himself. To see his figure and her own reflected together in the shop windows, was to her a source of

secret satisfaction. But at one of these windows, the day before his departure, Tom suddenly paused :

“ Mother,” he said, pointing to something in the shop, “ just read that there ticket, will you ? What’s it say ?—how much is that there work-box ?”

“ Two shillings,” replied Betsy. “ But lor, Tom ! what do you want with a work-box ? I’m sure they won’t let you take it to Indey with you !”

Tom winked, but made no verbal reply. He was struggling to get his fingers into that little leather convenience—somewhat like a watch-pocket with a button—which army clothiers, with a due recollection of the small means of the private soldier, were wont to give him to keep his money in. One of Tom’s fingers entirely filled this military pocket, and it was only by continued and dexterous scraping with it, that he was able to produce the two shillings, one after the other. Then, without a word of expla-

nation to his bewildered mother, he walked straight into the shop, placed his hand on the work-box, threw down the two shillings, and returned in all the triumph of possession.

“Why, what *are* you going to do with that?” asked Betsy. “What *do* you want with a work-box?”

A raw crimson blush came across Tom’s face, and when that had died away, he smiled knowingly, looked down upon his mother, and again—winked!

Now, Betsy had never seen Tom blush so deeply before, and she was quite unaware that he could wink. Winking was—as she thought—an accomplishment belonging only to fine gentlemen and wicked ladies! Once at the theatre, she had seen some one wink; but immediately afterwards that some one ran away with some one else’s wife! Tom had winked twice: what could he mean? Surely *he* was not a fine gentleman about to run off with——! Oh no; the idea was

preposterous! And yet the work-box! Ah! —the mother saw it all: that work-box was to be the instrument of persuasion!

She looked up imploringly at her son, and as far as eyes can speak, her's said—“ Oh don't, Tom!—don't be a fine gentleman and play the gallant! If you *are* a soldier, do as you would be done by, and not as soldiers would do unto you! Consider, you've a mother—you've a sister! Oh, Tom! don't be wicked!”

The young man saw this imploring look; but it moved him not. He kept on winking persistently, and looking down upon his mother with provoking slyness. At length, he made a fair start, and left her gazing after him in an agony of doubt.

He was quite out of breath when he reached his destination, which happened to be Mr. Grey's door. There he knocked and met the severe, scrutinising eye of Mrs. Grey. She was not acquainted with

the thorough reconciliation between him and his mother.

“ You’re a wild, good-for-nothing young man !” she said, looking angrily and contemptuously at his regimentals, “ and before you’ve done, you’ll break your poor mother’s heart ! What do you want ?—We don’t approve of soldiers here !”

Tom was greatly chagrined by this reception ; but he held to his point, and made no observation till he had edged himself fairly into the passage. Then he spoke :

“ But it’s all made up, you know. Mother’s forgiven me, and father’s forgiven me ! I give ’em my bounty money, and I’m going to Indey to-morrow !”

“ Oh !” said Mrs. Grey, “ they’ve forgiven you, have they ?—you’re quite sure of it ?”

“ Quite sure !” replied Tom.

“ Very well, then, if they’ve forgiven you, it’s no business of mine. I’ve nothing

to say against your being a soldier—of course not. Come in."

"Wait a bit," said Tom, holding back in the passage. "Is that there little gal here—her as was took out of a fire?"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Grey. "But what's that to do with your coming in? She don't mind you, and I suppose you are not frightened of her?"

"Oh, no; I aint frightened of her!"

"What's the matter, then?—why don't you come in?—what are you sticking in the passage for?"

"I want to know that little gal's name. What is it?"

"Rosa."

"Ah, yes,—I know that! But what's her other name? My name's Tom, you know; but I've got another name—Jackson. What's her name instead o' Jackson?"

"Oh, Fitzgerald, I believe," replied Mrs. Grey, impatiently.

"Fitsgerrold," repeated Tom, after

some difficulty with the Fitz, "Rosa—Rosa—Fittsgerrold! It's a long name to recollect: isn't it?"

"What do you want to recollect it for?" asked Mrs. Grey. "You're a strange fellow: what's the matter with you?"

"Why, you see," replied Tom, "I'm going to Indey, and Indey's a long way off, and p'raps I may be killed, and then, you know,"—here the raw crimson blush came to his cheeks again,—"I should like to think about somebody, and for somebody to think about me; and she'd do to think of nicely!"

Mrs. Grey at once saw what was in the wind, and but for Tom's serious face, would have laughed outright. As it was, she merely smiled, and said—

"Oh, that's it, is it? Well, come in, and let us see what Rosa has to say."

Rosa was in the parlour when Mrs. Grey and the recruit entered it. To Mrs. Grey's "Here's some one come to see you, Rosa!"

she merely returned a gentle "Oh, indeed!" And when Tom offered her his great hand, she shrunk back a little, and seemed to entertain a reasonable dread of close contact. She was obliged to let him have her hand, however, for a moment, and when he returned it to her, it was purely white and bloodless!

Luckily, dinner was about, and to this, upon invitation, Tom addressed himself with ease and effect. But as his plate grew empty, he recollected that his heart was full, and he cleared his mouth for action--

"What will you do," he said, looking piteously at Rosa, "when I go to Indey? I'm going!"

"Oh, I shall do just the same as I do now," replied Rosa, quite unaware of what her admirer was driving at. "Where is 'Indey?'"

"Oh, a long way off—a werry long way off!" said Tom, "Quite at the other end o' the world!—where there's black people who're so—so—so—black; and where it's

so hot that you get—you get—you get—quite hot, you know !”

“ And what are you going there for ?” enquired Rosa.

“ To fight !”

“ But can’t you stop at home and fight, if you want to fight at all ?”

This question puzzled Tom. The idea had never occurred to him before.

“ I suppose,” he said, humbly, “ that there aint no fightin’ to do here.”

“ Oh !” replied Rosa. And she relapsed into silence, and liked Tom none the better because he was going all the way to “ Indey”—wherever that was—to look for fighting !

So far, the young man’s attack had failed. But he had a reserve, and he now fell back upon it. He produced the work-box !

“ If you’d like to have that there box,” he said, bashfully, “ you may. I give two shillin’s for it !”

This was not a very gracious way of making a present ; but as Tom pushed the box into Rosa's lap, and nearly crushed her with it, she was fain to say, " Thank you !" and put it on the sideboard. Then the donor prepared to depart.

" I'm goin' now," he said, " and you won't see me again !—but you will think of me, won't you ?"

" Oh yes !" replied Rosa, " of course I shall ! And perhaps you'll come back some day ; and then won't your mother be pleased !"

" Mother !" repeated Tom, contemptuously, " it aint mother that I want to be pleased,—it aint mother ! It's somebody else, you know ! I'd tell you who, but I can't say it ! You will think of me, won't you ?"

" Yes," replied Rosa.

" And we'll all think of you !" said Mrs. Grey.

" And will you ?" asked Tom, looking

down upon the little girl, and dropping a great tear, like a hailstone, on her shoulder,—“ will you give me a kiss ?”

Rosa put her handkerchief to the great tear, sopped it up, and then looked to Mrs. Grey for directions. These directions must have been favourable ; for, after a few qualms and agitations, Rosa turned her cheek upwards ; and Tom, stooping from his six feet to her four, made a noise upon it like that made by boys who draw wet leather discs from the pavement ! Then he gathered himself up, took a farewell glance, said “ Good bye, good bye !—you *will* think of me ?” and departed.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE bandy little man, with the shrewd grey eyes, the hook nose, and the dirty bundle tied with red tape, was full of business. More fortunate than when he presented the bill to Richard Maldon at the barracks, or when he fastened upon Gerald at the police-station, he had now found a profitable client, and was preparing a brief for one of the boldest counsel at the criminal bar. He was employed to conduct the defence of a French gentleman named De Lisle, whose friends—as the little practitioner said to one of his professional

brethren—were tip-top people, and supplied him with no end of money !

By some unexplained means, this little gentleman had recently smuggled his name on to the roll of attorneys, and taken out his certificate to practise. His articles came from a Hebrew house convenient to Saint Mary Axe, and his connection was chiefly criminal by character, and miscellaneous by extent. His method of obtaining business was to watch the police-courts, and when he saw a case that was likely to go to trial, to make a snap at it, and, if possible, secure the confidence of the prisoner. In this way, he had caught at De Lisle and come to be employed by so haughty and scrupulous a gentleman as Sir Roger Maldon.

It is right, however, to say that Isaacs—so was the man called—exerted himself greatly for his clients, and by the brotherly aid of counsel, succeeded in rescuing a very great many rascals from justice. He was perfectly unscrupulous in his means, and he

took that view of his profession which makes it incumbent upon an attorney to undertake anything that is brought to him, and to contest for any villany that he may find profitable! In the present case, for instance, he had just given the finishing touch to his labours by packing off to America a most important witness against De Lisle, and by seeing safe on board a Boulogne boat the very man upon whose appearance the whole case turned!

He went to communicate these happy tidings to Sir Roger; but the baronet, although he supplied the little man with money, kept him at a distance, listened coldly to his jargon, declined to sanction his schemes, and always dismissed him summarily. The truth is, Sir Roger was ashamed of the whole affair, disgusted at the part he was compelled to play in it, and, but for Marie, would have retired to the Priory or gone abroad till it was settled. But Marie kept him to his work,

made him see the little practitioner, and every now and then got up a special fit of despondency—the burden of which was that her brother's misfortune was all through their coming to England!

“My dear Marie,” the baronet was wont to say upon provocation of this kind,—“the same thing might have happened to your brother anywhere. Depend upon it, the man who carries a knife will find occasion to use it!”

“Yes, yes,—but you will do all you can for him—you will give him every assistance, will you not? Recollect, he is a stranger here, an alien, and does not understand your laws and customs!”

“Of course—of course,” replied Sir Roger, impatiently. And then, as he gazed into Marie's appealing eyes, he felt uncomfortable, turned away, and whispered to himself—“Why, the woman looks and talks as though she had a claim on me!”

The day of trial, however, came, and as

the immediate result of Isaacs' professional labours, the attorney for the prosecution was altogether at fault. Where were his witnesses?—where was his injured man?—indeed where was his case? He knew Isaacs well enough, and understood the proceedings by which all evidence against De Lisle had been spirited away. But as he had no facts to go upon, he was scarcely in a position to bring the suspected circumstances before the jury. He instructed his counsel, however, to insinuate all he could, and, in the end, to press for a remand.

“My dear sir,” said the counsel, “that depends upon the temper of the Uncommon Serjeant. The case is anybody's as it stands, and my learned friend on the other side will, no doubt, make a great stroke for the winning hazard. As I have intimated, it all depends upon the temper of the Uncommon Serjeant!”

On that particular day the brow of justice was lowered, and the eye of justice—

which at the sessions is not so blind but that it uses an eye-glass—scowled upon the body of the court, and looked anything but clement upon the box of barristers. The box of barristers—none are genuine unless wigged and gowned—contained, with other less learned and less employed men, two shining lights of the criminal bar,—Mr. Barry and Mr. Valentine. Mr. Valentine, in De Lisle's case, was for the prosecution; Mr. Barry for the defence; and perhaps, if there was a pin to choose between them, the palm should have been given to the latter. But these two learned gentlemen were the especial terror of the representative of justice—the Uncommon Serjeant alluded to—who sat beneath the canopy and held the scales. They had often done him serious indignity, and cracked bad jokes, and made poor puns, in his presence; indeed, indulged themselves in any way that might make the court giggle and the Uncommon Serjeant wince. They sneered at

his law, and ridiculed his reception of fact ; they liked to find themselves at issue with him, and to read in the next day's paper an account of their little frolics—always thankfully received and made the most of by the glad reporter—headed, “Strange Scene at the —— Sessions!”—in which they figured as might two clever dogs that had worried a badger !

But upon the present occasion, the learned gentleman for the prosecution rose with less confidence than usual.

“Your worship will see,” he said, after a slight prelude, “that we are in a very peculiar dilemma.”

“Dilemma, Mr. Valentine!” exclaimed the Uncommon Serjeant, “dilemma ! Nice case, indeed ! Here, Mr. So-and-So, have you the depositions ? —are the witnesses ready ? Well, this *is* a case ! Who's that laughing ? Nobody, of course !”

“I should think, your worship, it *must* be somebody,” suggested Mr. Barry.

"Just so, Mr. Barry—just so. But how close this court is!—like an oven! If those windows are not opened, I shall leave it! Can't open them? Here crier; take the clerk's ruler!—smash 'em—smash 'em, sir! Well, Mr. Valentine, *will* you go on with your case!"

"If your worship will permit me, I will explain," replied Mr. Valentine. "But really, with your worship's usual impetuosity——"

"Impetuosity, Mr. Valentine!—who's impetuous?—justice is always deliberate! Let us have no more irrelevant remarks, but proceed with your case. This is a very simple matter: one Augustus De Lisle, charged with entering a dwelling house——"

"No, your worship," said Mr. Barry, rising for the first time, "not Augustus, but *Auguste*—A-u-g-u-s-t-e; not charged with entering a dwelling-house, but with something else that I must leave my learned friend to prove. I will merely say that my

client is a man of honour, a French gentleman of high lineage and illustrious descent ; a gentleman whose fathers may have crossed swords with our own at Agincourt or Cressy!—and that he is *not*—I repeat he is *not*—charged with anything of a felonious nature !”

“ Permit me,” said Mr. Valentine, “ as my learned friend has thought fit to tell you what his client is *not* charged with, to set you right upon the point. The prisoner at the bar is——”

“ Set me right, Mr. Valentine!—set me right!—are you aware that justice can never be set right? Where are the depositions? These them, eh? Now, the next time I have such stuff as this sent to me, it shall be returned—there isn’t a line of it legible! Well, come,—where are the witnesses? And stay, which of you, gentlemen of the jury, drank the bottled beer that was smuggled into the retiring-room? Prisoner, stand down a moment; and here, potboy,

come out of the body of the court, and get into the witness-box! Give him a pocket handkerchief before you administer the oath. Now, boy, did you or did you not supply the jury with bottled beer while they were locked up yesterday?"

"Your worship," interrupted Mr. Barry, rising majestically, "permit me to suggest that there is a case before the court. I think my client—a French gentleman whose ancestors may have struggled with our own at Oudenarde, Malplaquet, or last, not least, on the ever-glorious plain of Waterloo—ought to have precedence of a potboy."

But the Uncommon Serjeant went on :

"Now, boy, let us have the truth, and don't deny that you did smuggle in the beer. You'd much better be quiet and say nothing! Why don't you speak, sir, when you are questioned upon your oath? Well, never mind; you may go down. You're only wasting the time of the court. Now,

Mr. Valentine, *have* you any case? I'm disgusted with these interruptions and delays. Pray go on, sir!"

"I was about to explain," put in Mr. Valentine; "but with your worship's usual impetuosity——"

"Impetuosity! There you are again, Mr. Valentine! In this court, where is the dignity of the Bench? Gentlemen of the jury, I shall not forget that bottled beer! Now, Mr. Valentine, *do* go on!"

"The peculiar circumstances of the case render it necessary for me to ask for a remand," said Mr. Valentine.

"Your worship," exclaimed Mr. Barry, "I have to protest most strongly against such a course. My client has waited long enough, suffered enough, for justice; and, in the absence of all evidence against him, I submit that he ought at once to be acquitted!"

"Has that potboy left the court?" enquired the Uncommon Serjeant. "He has

not? Well, then, detain him; I saw him laugh just now!"

"*Heard* him laugh!" said Mr. Valentine, "who could not resist saying a smart thing, even though the case might turn upon it—" A laugh is a sound; a smile is a mere muscular expression. One you can hear; the other you can see!"

"That is not the question before the court, Mr. Valentine," said the Uncommon Serjeant. "In this place, we attend to one thing at a time. Now, prisoner, what have you to say to this?"

De Lisle—as had been suggested to him—shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and looked at his counsel.

"Ah! I see how it is!" exclaimed the Uncommon Serjeant, "the man can't speak the language: he looks innocent enough. And you've no witnesses, Mr. Valentine? Well, then, I must direct an acquittal. You may go down, prisoner; you are dis-

charged ; and mind you don't commit yourself so far again !”

“ As good as a play, isn't it ?” said Mr. Barry, addressing his client as they left the court.

“ Almost !” said De Lisle, “ But with one exception : I should prefer being a spectator merely !”

“ Ha ! ha ! I daresay !” said the counsel ; and presently he returned to the court, and again assisted his learned brother in badger-baiting.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE warmest welcome received by De Lisle, when he rejoined his friends, came from Blanche, the coldest from the baronet, and the intermediate display of feeling from Marie. One of the most confirmed and the best secured of woman's rights, is her right to be misinformed of what goes on out of doors, and to have her opinions in matters foreign to the household, cut out and trimmed to suit the wishes or the opinions of the tyrant man ! The tyrant man brings home her facts for her, or translates to her the every-day and out-door

meaning of what she finds in books and newspapers, and very often fences her off from close contact with matters that do no injury to his harder nature, but which might do violence to her softer sensibilities. The good that results from this right is more visible than the evil; for though woman may now and then be imbued with wrong opinions, those opinions are seldom sown broadcast, seldom allowed to have more than passive influence, and are mostly pliable enough to be bent back again. On the other hand, as in the case now under consideration—the case of Blanche—they may seriously mislead and perhaps endanger.

It had been made to appear to her that De Lisle was an ill-used man, with right, or at least custom, on his side, though law was against him. Only a garbled version of the adventure had reached her, and she naturally enough gave her sympathy to those with which she was best acquainted. Therefore when she saw De Lisle—pale, thin,

careworn, and with his arm still bound up and motionless, she offered him that kind of pity which is akin to love, and welcomed him so cordially that the man mistook the promptings of her warm heart, and chuckled to himself to think what his absence had effected!

“My dear Miss Maldon,” he said, “to return to sunshine like this, is indeed a happiness!—Marie, by comparison, seems cold, and your brother positively cruel! Marie, you see, is only a sister; Sir Roger only a friend!—But you——”

“Have you seen my brother?” asked Blanche, for she observed that the baronet kept rigorously out of the way.

“Oh yes—for five minutes. He said ‘Ah! how do you do?—is your arm well?’—and then started off as though he feared contagion. I don’t think he likes illness. But never mind; I have my reward where I could least have expected it!”

By an arrangement of the surgeon’s, De

Lisle's hand was on his heart when he said this, and the position helped the effect of his words, as he flung them off gallantly and gracefully for the benefit of his fair listener. Indeed, to any one not acquainted with the circumstances, the little scene—so well acted, on De Lisle's part,—would have had great significance, and might have led to mistaken remarks.

“Do you think,” he continued, looking piteously upon himself, “that I am fit for London? If I stay here, I must remain in my room; for even the roll of a carriage annoys me. The doctors were unskilful, I suppose, and let me fall into a low fever, from the effects of which quiet alone can rescue me. Oh for the soothing silence of home, without the difficulty of getting there!”

“But can we not find such a home in England?” suggested Blanche, “even at Maldon?”

De Lisle shook his head. "I have been too long," he said, "your brother's guest; a mere visit has come to be a residence. I took my leave of Maldon when I came to London."

"But circumstances have changed," said Blanche, "When you came to London you were well, now you are——"

Sir Roger entered, and Blanche turned to him:

"I have been trying," she said, "to persuade our invalid to go down to Maldon."

"Are you," asked the baronet, looking askance at De Lisle—"are you an invalid?"

"What do you think?—Look fairly at me!" was the reply.

But the baronet was not in the humour for close scrutiny; and the word invalid affrighted him. An invalid was—in his philosophy—a privileged nuisance, indulged and studied beyond reason and propriety. He had no patience with the thing; and he was not going to admit that his friend

was an invalid, and so give him a right to indulgences that were denied to healthy men. Besides, the mere association with an invalid was a terror!—To have to breakfast with a man who had just put his lips to a medicine bottle, who was perfumed with quinine or redolent of bark; who might be taken with a head-ache or a faintness or a feeble fit of some kind at any hour—even the dinner hour—in the day,—was not to be contemplated calmly. At any sacrifice, he must get rid of De Lisle till he was well.

“What Blanche says is right enough; there’s the Priory, if you are ill. I think you’d better go down at once.”

“And you——?”

“Stay here.”

“And Marie?”

There was a dead silence. What was to be done with Marie?—was she to go to Maldon, too?

“Slaves to propriety as we are,” said

De Lisle, "there seems to be but one course : Marie must go with me, or I must stay here !"

"Go where?" asked Marie, entering at the moment.

"To Maldon," said the brother.

"No, surely not?" was the reply. "London is just becoming pleasant ; indeed, so pleasant that I shall stay in it !"

"Shall !" exclaimed De Lisle.

Marie smiled, made some few grimaces, shrugged her shoulders, and otherwise disarranged her natural and artificial tranquillity. The result was that a letter—evidently from an English hand, and suspiciously like a *billet-doux*—dropped from her bosom and fell on the ground ! All eyes were turned upon it during the short time it remained visible ; and when it was hastily picked up and restored to its hiding-place, the annoyance, the confusion, and the deep blush that started to the cheek of

Marie, were no less attractive matters for curiosity !

De Lisle, however, was wise enough, and Blanche generous enough, to say nothing ; and the baronet was not moved to put impertinent questions. Such questions were at his tongue's end ; but there pride kept them halting ; and his only resource was to imagine all kinds of improper things. The letter might be from an admirer—even from Lord Dalton ; for that forward young man had turned his opera-glass upon Marie the other night during the last scene of *Norma*, and she had turned her opera-glass upon him ; and then they had both nodded ; and immediately upon the fall of the curtain, Lord Dalton's head, nodding again, and connected in some way with a noise that sounded marvellously like “ How de do ? ” made its appearance in a corner of the baronet's box ! It was at once decided by Sir Roger—with what truth there is yet

no saying—that the dropped letter was from Lord Dalton!

Had Marie known how the little mishap affected the baronet, she would have seen reason to rejoice at rather than regret it. His was that kind of passion which rivalry stimulates more surely than possession. After a complete conquest, the man would lay down his arms, and think, with others, that the pleasure was in the chase, and in the chase only! But while the conquest was doubtful, or seemed likely to fall to a rival, he would burn with the ambition of achievement! That was his case now: the letter had made him eager again.

“You stay with us, then?” he said, looking at Marie.

“Yes,” was the reply.

“And you, Blanche?”

“Of course Blanche stays!” exclaimed Marie. “Her presence could alone warrant my brother’s absence. I imagine, from what you say, that he is going to be absent.”

The conversation then dropped for a time, and left each to his or her thoughts. Those of the baronet were somewhat unpleasant, while those of Marie made her more and more buoyant every hour. De Lisle was wondering what excuse he could make to have Blanche's company during his retirement at Maldon, and Blanche was thinking it somewhat selfish of Marie to let him go there alone.

"We'll go," said Marie, presently starting up, "we'll go and see the Black Prince of whom all the world is talking!—Jung Bahadoor, they call him."

"I can't go," said De Lisle.

"I don't care to go," said Blanche.

"Then," exclaimed the Baronet, looking at Marie, "we go alone, eh?"

"Oh, certainly," was the reply; and the lady went to her dressing-room.

This Black Prince was the sight of the season, and the topic at all tables. He was reputed to be so handsome, to have such

eyes, such teeth, such hair, such simple and winning ways ! When he went to the theatre, and witnessed that poor ceremonial, the English ballet, his desires—stimulated, probably, by reminiscences of the nautch girls of his own country—were so piquant and natural ! He wanted the *premiere danseuse* to come to him, in her charming stage costume ; and he was, no doubt, willing to embrace the whole *corps de ballet* under similar circumstances. The dowagers were delighted, and proclaimed the Black Prince to be a paragon of simplicity ! Other little traits in his character were equally pleasing. Driving through the park one day, he met a lady—more conspicuous for her freedom of manner than for her good name—who smiled at him, showed him her white teeth, and ultimately stepped into his carriage. Just as the dowagers were delighted with his simplicity in the matter of the *danseuse*, was he delighted with this lady's simplicity in the way of accepting his

favours ! No doubt, when he reached home, like other great travellers, he wrote a book, in which he celebrated this peculiarity of the English ladies, and so pictured to his countrymen a more than Mahomedan paradise of houris in a remote corner of Europe !

It was this highly interesting Asiatic that the baronet and Marie went to see ; and it happened that, on the day in question, the Prince was at the house of no less a personage than a cabinet minister. Wherever he went, he had to run the gauntlet of a levee, and was sure to be hampered by a shoal of followers. Not even the cabinet minister could protect him from this ; and therefore the noble lord's reception-room was crowded.

Sir Roger Maldon was content with whatever gratification might be derived from a distant view of his highness ; and even of this gratification he soon tired. So he was just about to disappoint Marie by carrying

her off without a word from the Black Prince, when who should come up but Lord Dalton—free, familiar, impudent, and careless as ever!

“Ah! how de do?” said his lordship, smiling significantly at Marie. “Oh, by the bye, Maldon, you forgot to tell me the name of your hotel, and the *Post* says nothing at all about you. Is it Long’s, or Mivart’s, or Maurigy’s, or whose? Wonder you don’t hire a town house!—I do. Been introduced to the Prince, mam’selle? You havn’t? Oh, come along then!” And before the baronet could master his temper sufficiently to remonstrate, Marie—willing enough, as it seemed—was taken from his arm, and carried away by Lord Dalton to go through the ceremonies of introduction.

“Had my note, of course?” said the young lord, in an undertone, as they approached the Presence.

“Yes,” was the reply; “but really, I don’t think——”

“ Hush !—the Prince is looking this way ! Introduce us ——,” continued his lordship, muttering a name that was in everybody’s mouth at the time, and turning to the host.

“ Certainly,” said the minister. “ Your Highness, my Lord Dalton, and——”

The host paused and looked inquiringly at his lordship.

“ Oh,—say Lady Dalton—anything ’ll do ! You don’t mind, do you, Mam’selle ?”

Marie’s reply was inaudible ; but, unconsciously, perhaps, her face wore a peculiar expression of triumph.

“ And—Lady Dalton !” continued the minister.

The Black Prince bowed, smiled, showed his teeth, and turned to one of his suite. Then the whole suite showed their teeth, and their dull, oily eyes gleamed a little, and at last their mahogany faces were troubled with muscular contortions meant to be pleasing. The Prince, however, leant to his host, said something in broken English

that made his host laugh, and then looked curiously at Marie.

“What is it?” said Lord Dalton, laughing too.

“Oh!” exclaimed the minister, and he whispered to his lordship.

“What is the matter?” asked a dowager, who was eyeing the Prince with considerable satisfaction.

The minister condescended to whisper to this old lady: her diamonds demanded it.

“Oh, I *am* shocked!” she exclaimed. “But his highness is *so* natural!—he has such simple ways! Now, in any one else it would seem quite improper; but with his Highness ——”

When Lord Dalton and Marie turned to the spot where they had left the baronet, they found him in cold conversation with a gentleman whose face, unknown to the young lord, was familiar enough to his companion. This familiarity was, however, the cause of very great agitation on the lady’s

part; so great, that quite unconsciously she squeezed Lord Dalton's arm and shuddered! Yet, to ordinary observers, there was nothing to be alarmed at; on the contrary, Count Kreutzer's appearance was fascinating to most people, and his face expressed little but soft sensibility and perhaps rather feminine voluptuousness.

He was narrating to the baronet what he knew of the escape from the quiet house in St. James's, and mourning over the ill luck of De Lisle. When he saw Marie, he bowed profoundly, and assumed an expression that he kept solely for the service of the sex.

"We have not met," he said, "since Baden!"

"No!" replied Marie, still trembling.

"And then you avoided me!"

"Yes!"

It was well that Lord Dalton had Marie's arm, and was returning, with interest, the

pressure it so freely put upon his own ; otherwise, to judge from the lady's tone, and the expression of her face, she might have fallen to the ground as Count Kreutzer talked to her. As it was, Marie kept leaning, and Lord Dalton kept squeezing, till the gentleman was filled with the most supreme satisfaction, and the lady was just on the borders of hysterics.

“ I am going,” continued the Count—after Lord Dalton had said “ Maldon, who's your friend?—introduce me !” and that ceremony had been performed with an ill grace by the baronet,—“ I am going to Geneva to-morrow—have you any commissions for me? My business will take me almost to your house. What can I do for you?”

Marie, by a great effort, brought a smile to her face, and uttered inaudible thanks.

“ Did I ever tell you,” the Count continued, in so low a tone as to make Lord

Dalton listen, "that I had a brother—a wild womanly young fellow, all heart and little brains, who disappeared from Paris mysteriously?"

"Once," said Marie, "I think you did."

"Well, I've news of him; he's somewhere in the neighbourhood of Geneva; and to-morrow I start to see if I can restore him to his family."

Marie could bear no more. "This room," she said, "is insupportable! Let us go to the carriage. Lord Dalton, *au revoir!* Count, excuse me." and she turned to the baronet for his arm.

Suddenly, however, she paused, and disengaging herself from her companion, went back to Count Kreutzer.

"You start, I think, to-morrow?" she said.

"To-morrow."

"Ah! that will be too soon for my commands, if I have any. Give me another

day—say the day after to-morrow —and you shall hear from me !”

“ How can I refuse ?”

“ The day after to-morrow, then ?”

“ Yes.”

But when Marie returned, where was the baronet ?

CHAPTER XV.

SIR ROGER MALDON and Marie had a gloomy ride to the hotel, for scarcely a word passed between them—they were so absorbingly occupied with thought. Sir Roger's temper will be at once comprehended when it is known that he was induced by it to forget a most stringent rule of etiquette, and to leave Marie to find her way to the carriage as she might! Of course Lord Dalton was at hand to save her delicacy; and with him she left the reception-room, descended the stairs, sought the truant, and found him just stepping into the brougham.

Stung and tantalised as the baronet was by the conduct of Lord Dalton, he was much more suspicious of the strange influence exercised upon Marie by Count Kreutzer. In the Count there lurked a peculiar fascination that, greatly to Sir Roger's disgust, he had observed in one or two cases to be powerful with women of the world who were deaf to the insinuations of bolder, bigger, and more imposing admirers. They seemed to soften and submit in his presence, and to lose that nice conduct of the eye which betokens ease or indifference. But with Marie, the Count's influence was so great as to fright the colour from her cheeks, the black brilliancy from her eyes, and, indeed, to rob her whole aspect of its most distinguishing characteristics! The baronet was good at building stories upon slight foundation, and he made out the story of Count Kreutzer's connection with Marie to be this :—The Count was an early lover of her's, and had won her heart ; bu^t

something intervened to fulfil the old proverb, and so the match was broken off. They loved each other still, and when they met, the old sentiment was revived in them. Shortly related, this was what Sir Roger set down for the Count and Marie.

De Lisle and Blanche were at chess when the two malcontents returned.

“*Echec !*” exclaimed the latter with great animation,—“ Ah ! I have conquered !—I have won you !—you are mine !”

Sir Roger did not see the chess-board, so he looked hard at his sister. But upon nearer approach he observed De Lisle sweep the queen from the table, and he then understood that those ecstatic words of triumph were addressed to a mere piece of carved ivory !

“ You have seen his highness, then ?” said the victor. “ We have been reading of him in your absence. He seems to be a fine fellow, handy enough with his sword. This paper tells us that he cut his way to

the throne by making a hecatomb of his relations !”

“ A man of great resolution, I believe,” returned the baronet, coldly.

Marie sat down by her brother and began to talk seriously.

“ The day after to-morrow,” she said, “ Count Kreutzer leaves London.”

“ And goes,” asked De Lisle, “ where ?”

“ Where—as he thinks—he can do us a service. He has offered to execute any commissions we may intrust him with !”

“ Indeed !”

“ Yes.”

“ Very kind, very thoughtful, of him, to be sure. But ah ! how heavily this arm hangs ! Marie, follow me ; I shall want your assistance.” And the brother and sister left the room.

They had not been gone long when letters came—one for the baronet, one for Blanche. They were both from Maldon, and the latter ran thus :

“ MY DEAR BLANCHE.—I don’t know
“ what has come to this place : the people
“ in it are all mad. The servants do just
“ as they please, and are banded together
“ to insult and annoy me. You know my
“ little peculiarities and requirements : they
“ are not many ; but whatever they are,
“ they are my existence. None of them
“ are studied : my back hair has been down
“ for three days ; all my handkerchiefs have
“ been torn to rags ; and as to the *Eau-*
“ *de-Cologne*, that has been flung on the
“ floor and wasted. The wretches throw it
“ over me, and put it on my forehead, and
“ hold me down, and play all kinds of
“ tricks with me. The coachman drives
“ me just where he pleases, and I know the
“ cook means to poison me. There’s not
“ a soul in the house that has a grain of
“ sense, and I believe the servants have all
“ gone mad. Come down soon and send
“ some of them away. —MARGARET MALDON.”

As a commentary upon this, Sir Roger's letter was invaluable ; it ran thus :

“ SIR.—I grieve to say that Lady Maldon
“ —upon whom I have been in constant
“ attendance during your absence—has
“ suffered a very severe attack of her old
“ malady. Contrary to my advice, her
“ ladyship has been entertaining several of
“ her relations, all more or less afflicted
“ with weak intellects ; and this, I imagine,
“ has precipitated the calamity. The
“ housekeeper wishes me to write this, and
“ to say that her ladyship's conduct has
“ driven away several of the domestics.—I
“ am, sir, your most obdt. servt.,—JACOB
“ SCALPEL.”

These two letters brought the heaviest blow that had yet fallen upon the baronet—a blow that stunned, bewildered, and, for a moment, quite unnerved him.

“ Mad !” he said, looking at Blanche, and crushing the letter in his hand,
—“ Mad ! Why, what does this mean ?

Was the Priory ever a madhouse before, as this seems to intimate? Was this housekeeper ever privileged to talk and tattle and dictate such letters as these? Blanche, you have been at home and can answer me. What does the doctor mean by 'her ladyship's old malady?'"

The baronet's manner was so very unlike grief for the sufferer, and so very like grief for himself, that Blanche was in no humour to be merciful with him :

"He means, I believe, just what he writes," she said, "and the only way for us to meet such a calamity is to do all we can to lessen it."

This style of reply calmed Sir Roger a little.

"What is to be done?" he said, presently. "I look to you for advice now ; for I have the worst judgment, the worst temper in the world, for illness. I suppose one of the first things to be done is to send

down the best medical assistance to be had in London."

"And the next?" asked Blanche.

"For you to go down to the Priory. As for me, you know that I could be of no possible use there!"

Marie's return interrupted the conversation, and her quick intelligence divined that something had gone wrong.

"I intrude?" she said.

"No," replied the baronet, making great efforts to appear at his ease. "Has your brother determined to leave us in the morning?"

"I believe so," returned Marie.

"Then you will have a companion on your journey, Blanche!"

"Journey!" exclaimed Marie, "what journey? Surely you are not going to leave us? How can I, with my brother absent, stay here if you do?"

"Oh," said the baronet, making a melancholy effort to be gay, "we shall find

means. There are rooms enough in this hotel for you and me, and Blanche shall send down one of the maids from Maldon."

"Ah!" returned Marie, pretending to be put out, "it's a plot, a conspiracy, to inconvenience me! I suppose you're all tired of London, and want to drive me from it. But I shall stay here somehow, and accept an offer I have had from Lord Dalton. He wants to introduce me to his sister!"

De Lisle was delighted when he found that all things turned out as he wished, and, without any questions, he prepared, with great alacrity, to accompany Blanche. Early the next morning he was equipped—medicine chest and all—for starting; and when comfortably seated in the railway carriage, he turned to his sombre companion, and said:

"My good angel has surely helped me to this! Expecting a dull, tedious journey, and a month, perhaps, passed in solitude

the journey has been made a delight, and as to the solitude——”

The train met with a slight obstruction at that moment; the carriage jumped violently, and De Lisle was flung into Blanche's arms! Fearful screams were heard from the terrified passengers, and after much creaking and grinding of wheels, the train came to a standstill. The guard rushed past the carriages, calming their affrighted occupants with his best ability, and, after a time, when the women were almost scared out of their wits, and the men exasperated by detention, those who wished it were released, and the cause of the accident was explained. A goods train, attached to an invalid engine, had come to a dead standstill at an incline, and the express had run into it and crumpled up half a-dozen of its hinder carriages. The unfortunate driver of the express was lying a dead man on the slope of the embankment, and the stoker, in a condition scarcely better, was keeping

dismal company with him ! Of the passengers, some twenty or so were bruised and bleeding; and the rest thanking Providence for an escape ! But the wondrous wires were set to work ; a new driver and fireman came down ; and in half-an-hour the express, with a diminished cargo, was making its way towards Maldon.

De Lisle was not much hurt, and Blanche was merely alarmed. But the French gentleman's chain of ideas was fractured, and he uttered no more gallantries. Silent, pale, and agitated, they reached the Priory ; and their appearance gave the servants good cause for wonder. From the housekeeper to the scullery-maid, from the butler to the bootboy, the domestics were all more or less busy with doubt, suspicion and conjecture. At first, they expressed considerable objection to their young lady being married—as one of them would have it—to a Frenchman ! But before the day was over they began to hope that it was all for the best,

and that De Lisle would make Blanche a good husband ! The housekeeper, however, determined to be convinced, and therefore, towards the evening, she very pointedly addressed her young lady as " Miss." The reception this style of address met with seemed to settle the matter, and therefore the woman's heart was at rest, and the servants were enabled to breathe freely.

The state of things at the Priory, as laid by the housekeeper officially before Blanche, took the following form :—

Lady Maldon is altogether a changed woman. No longer the same quiet and unimpassioned nonentity as of old, she has taken to habits of violence and strange improprieties of language. In three weeks she has discharged as many waiting-maids, and the last one—her ladyship's own —while arranging her ladyship's head-dress, received a slap on the face with a hair-brush, and, resenting the little eccentricity by a word, the hair-brush was thrown at her ! About

this matter, the housekeeper produces two letters from a London lawyer. The coachman has suffered severely, because he declined to drive her ladyship "right into her dressing-room,"—his wig being torn from his head and flung to her ladyship's Blenheim spaniel. He also has been discharged, and the wig has already been impounded as the foundation of an action for $\frac{3}{4}$ damages. Letters are produced in evidence of this. The gardener has been called to the dinner-table, and had the tomato-sauce flung in his face for tasting "too green." *His* action has not been commenced because he declined to take her ladyship's notice to leave the premises. As to the cook, the trials that poor woman has suffered, will hardly bear description. The most severe of these happened when Lady Maldon went into the kitchen, tucked up her gown, stopped the roasting-jack, and having burnt a hole in the bottom of the best stewpan, sent all the others flying about! The cook's damages

being only those of sentiment, she has hesitated before consulting her solicitor. The most terrible event of all, however, happened within the housemaid's jurisdiction. Her ladyship having conceived a sudden desire to warm the bed herself, opened the pan, turned out the coals, burnt down the bed furniture, and nearly set the house on fire ! This was the climax that nerved the housekeeper to nerve the doctor to write to Sir Roger Maldon !

In the picture gallery Lady Maldon has done no more harm than could be brought about by disarrangement—the pictures having no power for provocation, and discreetly declining to answer her ladyship's florid addresses. One of the heir-looms, however—less favoured than its fellows, and wondrously like Richard Maldon—has suffered deposition, and others have had their faces turned to the wall for imaginary bad behaviour !

It has been her ladyship's pleasure now

and then to fancy herself a variety of historical characters—queens, of course—and always assisting at great occasions. Once she was Lady Jane Grey, declining and afterwards accepting the crown; at another time, Queen Mary, signing quires of death warrants; and at another—it happened to be that of Lord Dalton's inquisitive visit—she was Queen Elizabeth, receiving the Earl of Essex. Lord Dalton was the unhappy Earl, and scarcely understood his part. Her ladyship sat in a high-backed chair, and held out her hand for the Earl to kiss. He was at fault: instead of kissing her hand, he shook it heartily, and she gave him a vigorous box on the ear! Then she rose, waved her hand, felt for an imaginary train, and swept haughtily from the apartment.

“Damn strange old woman!” said his lordship, when he recovered himself, “doosed funny, though!” And he left the Priory.

All these things Blanche heard in silence

and sorrow ; but her sorrow was greater when she went to her mother.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed the unhappy woman. “ You had my letter, Blanche ! Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come down to settle these disgraceful servants ! I’ve been treated shamefully : look at my hair ; look at my handkerchiefs !—they’ve been torn almost to rags ! I had a terrible row yesterday, but things are quiet to-day, because I’m going to court. Lady Maldon !—make way for Lady Maldon ! Have you been to court since you’ve been away, Blanche ? Bye-the-bye—how is the Chevalier ? Ah ! there’s the carriage ! Good-bye, Blanche ; good-bye ! ”

And this was the greeting that Blanche received from her mother !

The next morning, she sat down to write a letter ; for that very day she had promised to meet Richard in London. He was to tell her how the business of the novel went on, and she was to hear the history—so far

as it was known—of Rosa. While Blanche was sealing this letter, De Lisle entered.

“I have not seen Lady Maldon,” he said. “May I pay my respects to her?”

“She keeps her room,” replied Blanche. “To-morrow, perhaps.” And the letter was sealed.

De Lisle, too, had a letter in his hand, which, as he said, he was just going—merely for the sake of the exercise—to post. The thought struck him that he might post Blanche’s letter with it

Without the least suspicion, she gave him the letter. He was surprised when he saw its address, for he made a shrewd guess that none but a lover would be written to so hastily. But he walked away with it, and it then occurred to him that the letter might refer to something which would interfere with the business he sketched out for himself. When he had left the Priory some distance behind him, he broke the seal, opened the letter, and read. Just as

he expected : Blanche urged her brother, to come down to the Priory immediately !

From their lofty points of observation, the crows watched De Lisle's progress. Suddenly a whole family of them flew after him. Deceived again ! Those white specks which the French gentleman tore up and scattered about were mere paper ! And this time, with a fore-warning of the past, the birds declined to afflict themselves with indigestion.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE publisher of celebrity whom Richard had selected to introduce the novel to the world, had given the work his consideration, and the result was polite but not favourable. On a certain day—lower down in the almanac than the author expected—he received a parcel and a letter. The loquacious waiter brought them to him, and hung about the table as though he had some personal interest in their contents :

“ For you, sir ; no answer, sir.”

Richard took the favours gloomily, and with heartbreaking suspicions. The letter

was so barren of promise, and the parcel so like the El Dorado! His hand trembled as he opened the missive, and his heart ached grievously as he read the following:—

“ Sir,—I am desired by Mr. —— to thank
“ you for the favour you have done him in
“ submitting the accompanying M. S, and to
“ say that he regrets being compelled to
“ decline the publication.”

No wonder that the waiter stared at Richard in sheer astonishment, and inwardly muttered “ Brandy, sir ? ”—for the disappointed author was taken with a fit very like faintness, and his face—never ruddy—grew pale and painful to look at! No wonder, either, that the waiter bethought him of an anecdote bearing, as he imagined, upon the case:—

“ Bad news, sir? Ah! there’s a good deal of bad news in the world! *I* recollect a gent, dined here every day, sir, once had a letter just as you might now. He looked at it, dropped it, as you’ve done, sir; and

called for brandy. I brought him the brandy; he drank it, and called for another; drank that, and called for another; and then he said, says he, 'Charles, my boy, I'm ruined!—I was worth ten thousand pound yesterday, and now I havn't a penny!—I'm a beggar! But what's the odds, so long as you're happy?' 'No, sir,' says I, 'no odds, indeed!' 'Never mind,' says he, 'to-morrow's the Spring meeting, and if Tearaway wins, I shall back her all through the year, and if I don't make twenty thousand pound by her, she ain't a horse!' 'I hope she will win, then, sir,' says I,—'I hope so too, Charles,' says he, 'and if she does, I shall present you, Charles, with a poney!' 'Thankec, sir,' says I,—and, odd enough, sir, Tearaway did win; but I don't know how it was, I never saw the gent again, and I havn't had the poney to this day!"

Richard rose when the waiter concluded his anecdote, and left the coffee room. He took the parcel and the letter with him, and

reading the one again, and opening the other, assured himself that his disappointment was complete. The novel, then, as well as the epic, had been refused—coldly refused, and cruelly returned—to blight his hopes of independence and plunge him anew into grief! Where was the fault—where the failing in the work—that made the whole valueless? Was there any such fault or failing? An hour's turning over of the rejected manuscript convinced Richard that there was not, but that to envy, or carelessness, or one of the other ills that literature is heir to, must be attributed the rejection of the *El Dorado*!

This poor consolation, however, could not hinder him from a little unmanly display of feeling; could not keep the tears from his eyes, and the dull desolate words of despair from his lips! He flung himself on the bed, and gave free vent to these till the manhood returned to him, and he was rescued by a new gleam of hope. Then he went

back to the coffee-room, called for the newspaper, and ran his eye down the advertising columns. One of these columns was entirely appropriated to the service of a name more or less familiar to the world—the name of Mr. Tympan. Richard at first concluded that Mr. Tympan must be a great and voluminous writer—a Lope de Vega, a Voltaire, a De Foe, or some other Leviathan of the literati; for his name was wedded to almost every conceivable kind of work that had ever issued from a publisher's. There were—"Tympan's Select Library"—"Tympan's Universal Library"—"Tympan's Diverting Library," and "Tympan's Library of Useful Knowledge;" "Tympan's Elucidator"—"Educator"—"Demonstrator"—"Calculator"—and "Investigator;" Tympan's Dramatist"—"Essayist"—and "Novelist;" "Tympan's Pope"—"Dryden"—"Milton," and, last, not least,—"Tympan's Shakspeare!" Here Richard paused, and the question involuntarily occurred to him—

Who wrote Shakspeare?—Surely not Mr. Tympan! Thus, he gained a key to the whole mystery, and began to comprehend that Mr. Tympan did not write any of the books to which his name was attached, but that he merely looked upon and labelled them as his, in compliance with an ambitious trade custom, more honoured in the breach than the observance!

Richard observed, too, that for another class of books Mr. Tympan had another custom, and squeezed his announcements into odd corners, where, but for the small type, and the suspicious prefix "[advertisement]," they might have obtained the attention due to ordinary paragraphs. Such attention they did occasionally get in spite of drawbacks, and simple people were induced to accept the statements contained in them as impartial expressions of opinion. Thus Richard's eye rested upon one of these announcements, that in its time, had had due effect with many old maids and country

cousins, and which, with some slight variation, was as follows :—

“ [ADVERTISEMENT.] — That soul-harrowing work of fiction, ‘The Rat-catcher ; or, Life from Hole to Hole,’ has revolutionised domestic literature. Never was there a more powerful, heart-rending, and, at the same time, thoroughly Christian work. It teaches the loftiest morality, inculcates the most cheering religious truths, and places the great fundamental relations of social life upon a sound basis. It will, perhaps, add to the absorbing interest the work has excited, when it is known that its author was, only twelve months ago, a convicted thief, a drunkard, and one of whom it may be said that his hand was against every man, and every man’s hand against him ! Price 1s. 6d. London : Tympan.”

How Mr. Tympan had achieved this prominence in the publishing world may be told in a few words. Once upon a time, there was a great literary noise made in America by a woman of talent ; and it was determined to repeat this noise in England. The arrival of the American packet set

half-a-dozen printers to work, and among them, Mr. Tympan. As the whole matter was one of piracy, and Mr. Tympan's grappling-irons were ready to hand, he tried a venture, and struck off a few thousand copies for his own selling; a few thousand more; a few thousand more; and so on, till he reached a good, round, remunerative number. From that time, Mr. Tympan watched the American book market; and as many little noises—degenerating ultimately into nuisances—followed upon the great one, he was well rewarded. But one speculation begets another. If only for patriotism's sake, Mr. Tympan determined to go beyond mere reprints, and to publish something original and English. He held up his finger, and lo! manuscripts poured in upon him, and he had to build a lumber-room and buy a waste-paper basket!

It will be remembered, perhaps, that when—as has been related in chapter five—Mr. Tympan's printing establishment was

burnt down, huge bundles of paper were blown into the air, and drifted with the wind, and fell scattered, some of them a mile away. Many of these bundles came from the lumber-room which the magnate had built to accommodate the literary treasures submitted to him. And for days after the fire, a number of attenuated and studious-looking gentlemen might be seen poking and turning over the rubbish of the ruined place, and hopefully waiting to cry "Eureka!" They were authors, looking for the manuscripts they had submitted. Few of them were enabled to utter the cry of satisfaction; but let any one of the disappointed get a patient man by the button, and the tale of blighted aspirations he had to listen to was horrible, heartrending, and always to be continued at the next meeting!

To the magnate, however, the fire was fortunate; he came out of it like the Phœnix, for he had a brass semblance of that bird on the front of his premises. His

credit was, at the time, somewhat shaky, and the result of his home speculations on the wrong side of his balance sheet. But when all his valuable stock was consumed, his ledgers burnt, and the insurance came in, he was set up again, and began business upon a better basis than ever !

Richard determined to wait upon this speculative publisher, and to try the effect of the *El Dorado* upon him. He lost no time in doing so, and he found the magnate—as he always was upon first application—engaged. After a time, the supposed engagement came to an end, and the sharp note of an alarum informed one of the clerks that Richard could have his audience.

“ Well, sir ? ” said Mr. Tympan, looking up but slightly, when Richard entered, “ What can I do for you ? ”

The manuscript author gave a hasty explanation of his business.

“ Oh, a novel ! ” exclaimed Mr. Tympan. “ By whom ? ”

"By me."

"Yes, sir; I suppose it's by you, as you tell me you're the author of it! But, then, who are you? What have you written before? Have you written anything?"

"Written, but not published," said Richard, diffidently.

"Then, sir," replied the magnate, "you've not written a line! and why not be straightforward?—why not say so? In the literary world, sir, nothing's written till its printed!"

"Dear me!" returned Richard, stung a little, "I thought it was just the reverse, and that nothing was printed till it was written!"

"Smart! young gentleman, — smart!" said Mr. Tympan, "but it won't do! A man may go on writing and writing till he writes his head off; but till somebody goes on printing for him that man has written nothing!"

Mr. Tympan was always well satisfied

with himself when he had uttered a paradox; it made him lively and free of speech.

"You see that room?" he said, pointing to a dull chamber that Richard had taken for the coal-cellar. "That's my new lumber-room! It hasn't been built many months, and yet look how full it is! All those bundles are manuscripts! Nothing surpasses the industry of authors—manuscript authors, I mean. The others are the laziest vagabonds alive!"

Mr. Tympan said this to most of the literary novices who came to him: it was his way of encouraging them; besides, it was his custom to look upon literary people as creatures to be scorned if obscure, and abused if famous.

"However," he continued, "you may leave your manuscript if you like. We'll see what it's made of. Good day!" And he touched the alarum.

Richard—not much buoyed up by Mr. Tympan's reception—returned to the hotel;

and, as it was the day appointed for Blanche's coming, became once more a tenant of the dreary and darkly-furnished sitting-room. The thought of his sister's kindly presence cheered him a little, and made him acknowledge that though the world was full of annoyances, it was not without its consolations. He sat down idly, and waited for her arrival; and when the appointed hour chimed forth from a neighbouring clock, he listened eagerly for her footfall on the stairs. But half-an-hour passed, and yet no Blanche; half-an-hour more, and still Richard was alone! He grew despondent then, and recollected how punctual she used to be. What detained her now? Ah! there was a footfall on the stairs!—a light, lady's footfall. Blanche at last! He ran to the door, flung it open hastily, thrust forth his hand,—when lo! a cold clammy substance met and yielded in his grasp! He turned back, cursed his foolish impatience, and—wiped his hands.

For, in the heat of the moment, he had seized the fist of the housemaid, and squeezed a wet flannel and a scrubbing-brush!

This mishap made his temper worse and worse. He flung himself into a chair, bit his lips till the blood almost started from them, and surrendered his reason to unkind suspicions of his sister. She had clearly broken faith with him, and at a moment, too, when her consolations were more needful than ever. Apart from his literary disappointments, he had an anxiety preying at his heart—an anxiety that waits upon the prospect of want! A man cannot starve, even though he be, or aspire to be, an author! He must eat, drink, and walk about in the sight of his fellow men as though he belonged to civilization. He is not blessed with immunity from vulgar desires and necessities. What, then, was Richard to do, when, with the end of his means approaching, his wits as yet showed

no sign of helping him? Suppose Mr. Tympan should be dilatory, and not pay for the novel immediately he accepted it!—suppose he should decline it altogether! The last notion the author discarded as needlessly agonising and improbable, and defined his period of possible starvation to be that which would elapse between the disbursement of his last shilling and his receipt of a substantial cheque from Mr. Tympan!

The time sped away, and still Blanche came not; but, in place of her, there appeared every half-hour or so a satellite of the head waiter's, who went through a pantomimic performance intended to remind Richard of his responsibilities as an eating and drinking Englishman. This performance had always a certain tiresome sameness; but the last time it was gone through, the waiter, after dusting the table, and fanning the sideboard, and poking the fire, and picking up several small scraps of paper

that Richard had scattered about in his nervousness, lighted the wax candles, and said—

“Get you anything, sir?”

“Nothing!” was the gloomy reply.

“It’s eight o’clock, sir!”

“Pray leave the room, will you!” exclaimed Richard, fiercely.

“Yes, sir; certainly, sir,” said the waiter, and he departed.

The wax candles burnt slowly but certainly, and Richard marked and measured the time by their assistance. There were other evidences, too, that the evening waned apace: the bell of a neighbouring prison tolled its dull summons to rest; the change-ringers of a neighbouring church did violence to the ears of a whole parish. Then a tired organ-grinder came and wound up his day’s business by a complete performance of every tune on his barrel, and an encore. As a last infliction, a cornet player blew defiance from the public-house oppo-

site. But while he was—sympathetically enough — playing “The Heart Bowed Down,” Richard heard another footfall on the stairs! He hastened to the door, opened it, and there stood the waiter, balancing himself on his toes.

“Dinner, sir?” said the man, putting his head into the room.

Richard made no reply, but let the door slip from his hand; and as it closed sharply with a spring, the waiter went away with red spots dripping from his nose, and falling on his shirt-front.

A very short time elapsed after this little mishap before Richard heard more footsteps, and saw the door pushed back cautiously. Then appeared the head of the hotel proprietor, then the torso of the waiter, and just in the rear the dirty cap of the housemaid.

“It’s my opinion,” said the latter, “that he’s mad! He squeezed every drop of water out of my flannel!”

"I'm sure I've lost half-a-pint of blood from my nose!" exclaimed the waiter.

"Well, well, we'll see," said the proprietor; and advancing cautiously upon Richard, he began a parley:

"You've acted improper to this young woman—in my service sir!—you've not acted like a gentleman, sir."

"No! that he hasn't!" echoed the housemaid.

"And you've struck this young man—also in my service, sir!"

"Yes," said the waiter, applying a napkin to his nose, "attacked me most cowardly!"

"Now, such goings on I don't allow in my house. I've come to tell you so, and to say that you're no gentleman, sir, and that the sooner you pay your bill and go, the better!"

Having safely delivered himself thus far, and finding Richard a harmless creature, not afflicted, as he had at first imagined, with fine phrenzy or hydrophobia, the hotel

proprietor made a further advance, waved his hand imperiously when Richard volunteered an explanation, and continued his remarks :

“ No, sir ; don't say a word to me. Whatever you've got to say, say to the young man you've injured, and the young woman you've insulted. The young man will, if he takes my advice, get a warrant against you, and as to the young woman—— Ah ! that's right, John ! Now, sir, here's your bill ! Pay it, and leave my premises ! ”

The landlord presented the bill, as he might have presented a pistol ; and to Richard it was almost as terrible an instrument ! And how could he explain away the apparent ferocity of his conduct ?—To say that he mistook the housemaid for his sister, and let the door fly in the face of the waiter because that face disappointed him ; to explain that he was neither mad nor vicious, but that he felt both the one and the other ; would scarcely mend the case. How could

these people understand his hopes, his agitations, and disappointments ! Blanche, Blanche, all this was your doing !

In his extremity, Richard fell back in his chair, and but for those three pairs of hostile eyes staring at him, he might have wept bitterly ! As it was, after a time, he tried the effect of explanation :

“ Will you listen to me, sir ? Will you not take my word that what has happened was purely the result of accident ? ”

“ That’s my bill ! ” said the landlord, presenting the document again at Richard. “ Pay my bill, and then we’ll see what’s to be done. ”

Richard grew tired of this tone, so he left his chair, and walked towards the door.

“ Permit me, ” he said, “ to go to my room. ”

“ Oh certainly ! ” replied the landlord, “ But we shall follow you. What’s in that room’s mine till my bill’s paid ! And let me tell you, that it’s my opinion you’re no

good!—you're a suspicious character! Now, for my part, I should like to know what you've got in your room!"

"Peace, sir!" exclaimed Richard, "and let me pass!"

"No," replied the landlord, "You don't though!—and it's no use crying 'peace' here! 'Police' would be better. What do you say?—suppose I cry police?"

Richard could bear the scene no longer; so he tried to force himself past his enemies. But the landlord took him by the collar, the waiter caught him by the legs, and the housemaid gave the detention her moral support. Richard was a mere child in their arms; but still he struggled, and drew his captors to the landing-place.

"Fetch a policeman!—fetch a policeman!" cried the landlord. "Ah! here comes some one up stairs!"

"Richard!" exclaimed a hearty voice.

"Gerald!" was the reply. And the new comer delivered two clever blows—one on the breadbasket for the landlord; one on

the already damaged snuffbox for the waiter ; and Richard was himself again !

“ At least,” said Gerald, ranging himself on the side of his friend, “ the struggle is more equal now !”

The landlord, however, declined to renew the struggle under altered circumstances ; but went into a rambling statement of the wrongs suffered by his servants.

“ And now,” he asked, “ do you think this gentleman’s acted like a gentleman ? All I told him was to pay his bill and go.”

“ Give me the bill,” said Gerald, “ And Richard, you go and pack up. You must, of course, leave this place.”

Richard went sullenly to his room, and did as he was desired. When he returned, he found that the artist had settled the bill, paid the waiter’s damages, and indemnified the housemaid for her fancied wrongs.

“ Come,—give me the portmanteau !” said Gerald—“ This way !” And the two friends left the London hotel.

CHAPTER XVII.

RICHARD MALDON was one of those unhappily sensitive people who, by magnifying their miseries create for themselves what might be strongly described as "a hell of their own." These unfortunates are for ever putting up their backs in retaliation for fancied injuries and imaginary slights, and are thus condemned to a condition of chronic fever for which the whole *materia medica* has no relief. In all spheres we may find them; and whether they sigh for vacant garters, or groan in spirit for vacancies of a more vulgar description, they are al

broadly stamped with the same distinguishing characteristics and are equal causes of annoyance to their respective circles. To pick an example from middle life—let any one of them be unasked to this fête, to that soirée, or to the other dinner-party ; be forgotten when the hampers go round at Christmas ; or be left in ignorance of this birth, that death, or the other marriage ; and lo ! the earth shakes, the heavens open, and those who have provoked the storm must take heed of the consequences !

As Richard left the hotel, this gloomy influence was heavy upon him. He magnified Blanche's supposed negligence till it took the most cruel and traitorous proportions, and he blindfolded himself to any light that the chances of mishap or accident might throw upon her unaccountable absence. Nothing could shake his belief that he was cruelly neglected, that he had suffered a grievous wrong, and that the society his sister cultivated of late had sup-

planted him in her affections! He was sure of all this; and he was suspicious of much more. He could see Blanche—gay, heartless, listening to De Lisle, and imbued with the prejudices of the baronet; he could fancy her now and then entertaining a half-pitiful, half-contemptuous thought of himself, and quickly discarding it as a miserable interruption to her pleasures! Upon this vision he brooded till it became a fixed picture in his mind, till he had reasoned it out by all the rules that guide opinion; and when he had done this—when he had built up his horror—he covered his eyes before it and wept for its existence!

It was in vain that Gerald pleaded hard for Blanche; in vain that he suggested every known excuse for her absence, and invented many plausible stories that did credit to his constructive skill. It was all to no purpose.

“It’s nothing, Gerald,” returned the

miserable man, "but sheer neglect!—and the cause, the cause, is apparent enough!"

"Oh, nonsense!" replied Gerald. "You put the very blackest construction upon what, after all, will, perhaps, turn out to be a mere accident! Get rid of these absurd suspicions. Why, you may test them in a moment!—At what hotel are your friends staying?"

"Gerald! Would you have me stoop for recognition and beg for remembrance? Would you have me whine for the very alms of affection? Would you advise me to go where my brother is, and finding Blanche between him and his friend, pray that I might have a word—for that I feared I was forgotten?"

"Pshaw!" returned the artist, "you mouth like an actor! Pray descend to the level of common sense and serious conversation!"

"Well, then, I will speak plainer, and

give you good—or bad—grounds for my belief. Did I ever tell you that there is a plot afloat—a design for a double link between my brother and his friend?”

“No,” replied Gerald, somewhat agitated.

“Then perhaps you will understand my suspicions better when I say that I am convinced there is a bargain between the two men, of which Blanche is to be the victim!”

“Richard!” cried the artist, seizing his friend’s hand, “do you really believe this?”

“I do—as I’m a living man!”

And the two friends became fit companions!

“And thus, you see,” continued Richard, more comfortable and colloquial now he had a brother in misery beside him—“thus comes her forgetfulness of me. That she should discard me is a necessary part of the bargain. All natural enough as the world goes, and irreproachably prudent according to the canons of correct society.”

Gerald now rivalled his friend in the in-

tensity of his woe ! Over the seeming grave of the lost sister it was Hamlet and Laertes once again !

“ There are some disappointments,” pursued Richard, half in soliloquy, “ that we can bear calmly ; but they are not of the affections. The world may disappoint and despise us ; rebuke us—as I can plainly understand—for our overweening vanity, and call us fools to our faces ! Yet we are not utterly cast down. But when the world within—the world of sister and brother, lover and mistress—is false to us, what is there left to live for ? Nothing—nothing.”

“ Nothing—nothing,” echoed Gerald.

And so they went on, feeding the fires of grief that consumed them ; and when in this dreary friendship one flagged, the other was at his post, and eager to assert his misery !

As they walked along, they relieved each other now and then of the portmanteau, and so divided the heavy duty. But when

they reached a great thoroughfare, several ragged urchins surrounded them, and begged hard for the burden.

“ Carry it for you, sir ? ” asked one of the urchins, in a tone peculiar to boys who run barefooted, and often more objectionably bare, about London.

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Richard, letting the bundle fall upon the pavement, — “ But where ? ”

“ Oh, the studio, of course, ” replied the artist ; for he felt that Richard and himself, being both wretched, were fit companions. Richard felt the same ; and not for the world would these two miserable men have parted, and weakened their great sorrow by division. No : union is strength — even in wretchedness ! So the ragged little boy was allowed to stagger on behind them under the weight of the portmanteau.

When they reached the studio, they sat down gloomily in the parlour devoted to private purposes, and mocked with their

miserable faces its general aspect of cheerfulness. For this parlour was not the desolate and ill-furnished chamber that, in the time of Mr. Maguire, afforded mere shelter to the artist's patrons. It was well furnished and adorned with taste. It was cosy, and suggestive rather of marital luxuries than bachelor makeshifts; and yet it had a dilettante air that scarcely obtains under feminine auspices. The pictures were not domestic; neither was the great display of pipes. The chairs were constructed for easy, lounging positions, and the table had a suspicion of Auld Lang Syne hovering about it. The whole place, too, was in "most admired disorder," and here and there were busts and statuettes that husbands mostly confine to their bedrooms or their studies. Then there were alpen-stocks, broad felt hats, and mysterious leggings such as accompany men who climb mountains or explore strange countries;—antlers, fox-brushes, a boar's tusk or two,

and several skins of ill-shaped fishes. Of these things, some were Gerald's own trophies, some came from his old patron, and others were obtained by means well known to small tourists who wish to be thought great ones. Altogether, the room was a picture, and presented just such an appearance as might please a manly and artistic mind.

But alas ! to all this bravery there was—when discovered—a drawback ! There was a giant piece of furniture in the room, not exactly

“ A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day ! ”

for we have grown out of such simplicities ; but an ornamental Viennese contrivance, the use of which by day was doubtful, but which by night—when its inside was laid flat out before it—became a bed and bedstead. The arrangement suited Gerald ; for he had an outer box just large enough for a dressing-room, and while he was occupied in this place, the landlady's little ser-

vant destroyed all bed-chamber evidences in the other.

In this room, then, the two miserable men tried to make themselves comfortable ! and by way of doing so, on his part, Gerald took down one of the pipes, and said—

“ I shall smoke.”

As a kind of dreary joke, too, the artist pushed a cigar-box to Richard, with the simple recommendation—

“ They’re very good.”

“ Yes, I daresay,” replied Richard. “ But not now—another time.” And as he pushed back the box, a sickly smile crossed his face, a similar dull light appeared on the face of Gerald, they both uttered a low chuckle, and then were silent.

So the first night of Richard’s new lodging passed away ; but the next there was entertainment. Mr. Grey was expected.

“ He visits me once a-week, and always on one night,” said Gerald. “ Lately, he

has brought Rosa, who takes wonderfully to these apartments."

"Oh!" replied Richard. "Then she may come to-night?"

"She may."

Gerald fancied that his friend was a little more cheerful after this conversation, and that he lighted up remarkably when he heard Mr. Grey's knock.

"Rosa is with him!" he exclaimed, "I can hear her voice.

The visitors entered; and, for a moment, a new and thankful feeling welled up from Richard's heart, chased away his gloom, and made him hopeful.

"Ah! sir," said Mr. Grey, seizing his hand, "how fortunate this is! I've brought Rosa, whom you haven't seen I don't know how long! It's very strange, but she begged so to come here to-night! Though," continued Mr. Grey, seriously, "the evenings are getting cold and damp, and it aint the wisest thing for her to do. Rosa,

my dear, isn't it lucky?—here's Mr. Maldon—your preserver, Rosa!"

That word preserver always jarred on Rosa's ears, and quite failed of its due effect. Instead of making her grateful and affectionate towards Richard, it set her thinking about her mother, and wishing that Richard was away. It did so now. She turned from Gerald, and gave her hand so coldly to his friend, that the new feeling of happiness just welling from his heart, was sunk again, and another hope was wantoned to the winds!

Mr. Grey had much to say upon one subject, and that subject was of course Rosa. In account with Gerald as to her doings, he was just one week in arrear, and the time had arrived for clearing up. It was his pleasure to look upon Rosa as a mere child, and to talk of her as he would have talked of a little miss in socks and pinafores. It never occurred to him that in less than

three years she would be a woman, and that even now she might have womanly fears, feelings, and delicacies. He held fast to the fiction of her being "quite a child," and thus made her feel—sometimes rather acutely—that childhood has its limits and coming womanhood its peculiar sensibilities. On the present occasion he was minute in his fond foolishness. What time she got up, what time she went to bed, what she liked, and what disagreed with her,—all these trifling matters Mr. Grey fully explained; and even the fact that she had taken a dose of something that very morning, found faithful record. But at this point Gerald thought fit to interfere:

"You forget," he said, "that Rosa is growing almost a woman, and that she might prefer to keep these little things to herself!"

"A woman!" repeated Mr. Grey, "Rosa a woman! Oh, oh, oh!" And he went on to relate that yesterday, after eating an

apple-dumpling, she felt anything but well—in fact, that she had—yes, she had—the stomach-ache! “Though,” he continued, “I fancy that the dumpling was a heavy one, and I think I heard your mother, Gerald, say that she was short of suet! Or perhaps apple-dumplings may not agree with Rosa! Very likely not. Why I recollect, Gerald, when you were a boy——”

A carriage drove up to the door just then, bang went the steps, and the artist’s bell was pulled vigorously. Gerald guessed who it was, and was out in a moment.

“Ah, master artist!” exclaimed a voice that we have heard before—“I’ve more business for you! But stay,—you’ve company, perhaps? Don’t let me disturb you. Ah! you have! Well, another day will do, or you can call upon me to-morrow. Our business will take some time. But, notwithstanding,” continued the curious old gentleman, “I’ll just peep through the crack of the door, and see what your com-

pany's like. I've a sort of parental anxiety for you, my boy, and you know I'm fond of jokes. Capital!—I can see the whole room in that mirror. Ah! all very proper—nothing in the way of *The Rake's Progress*! There's a middle-aged man, and a young man, and a fair little——. My boy! now I look again, what vision is that?—whose face is that?—There, in the glass."

"That," replied Gerald, wondering at his old patron's energy, "is a young girl who has become a visitor here by accident!"

"And her name?"

"Rosa."

"Yes,—well,—what else?"

"Fitzgerald."

The old gentleman sighed heavily, and shook his head. Then he turned from the door, and wrung Gerald's hand.

"It's very, very, like a face that once was dear to me, my boy! The name, too, is her's! But all that may be accident.

Come to me to-morrow, and we'll see, we'll see !”

He tottered feebly away, entered the carriage, and shrouded himself from observation ; but could one of those two men on the box have peeped into the vehicle, he would have seen his master crouched up in a corner and giving way to a womanly weakness that might have afforded wonder for the entire kitchen.

When Gerald returned, he regarded Rosa with new curiosity, and, indeed, studied her face so closely that she blushed and looked at him wonderingly in return.

“ What’s the matter, Gerald ?” asked Mr. Grey. “ We heard you whispering with somebody.”

Gerald essayed to turn the conversation. “ Do you know who that somebody is ?” he enquired.

“ No.” replied Mr. Grey.

“ My earliest friend—my first patron ; the man to whom, next to Providence, I am

indebted for all the good that has happened to me !”

“ God bless him, then !” said Mr. Grey, reverentially.

“ Amen !” exclaimed Gerald,

This was a fervent, not a fulsome prayer, and a just benediction ; for the old gentleman who had gone away in grief was a worthy man indeed ! What great services he had performed for the young artist ; what solid kindnesses he had helped him with ; what cheering words of encouragement he had lavished upon him ; need not be detailed here. They may be easily guessed, and to record them would be mere persiflage. Besides, the old gentleman himself would have known no greater offence than to have had his good deeds catalogued and served up in large letters with notes of admiration ! And if such men are rare, it is the fault of fashion ; for fashion, if it can only seize upon and identify them, will dress them up

and exhibit them in such guises, that they shrink and die off with delicacy !

The time came, however, for Mr. Grey to take Rosa home—as he expressed it. He had no thought of taking himself home ; but believed that he should get home because it was his duty to see Rosa there. The absolute fact of his going except on her account, did not seem palpable to him. He only went home with Rosa !

“ Good-bye, Gerald ! ” he said. “ Good-bye, Mr. Maldon. And if you don’t mind our homely place, we shall be glad to see you—shan’t we, Rosa ? You must come, if only for Rosa’s sake.”

For Rosa’s sake ! Richard looked at the girl to see what effect the idea had upon her ; and as he turned, he saw her holding Gerald’s hand and looking up lovingly to his face !

The sturdy man and his tender charge, were, however, off at last. They skipped along merrily together, and neared their

home. They were almost within sight of it when a grey-headed drunkard reeled against them, and pushed Rosa from the pavement. Mr. Grey thrust out his brawny fist, and the man reeled again, and fell. As he struck the pavement, his hat slipped off; and then, in the dull gleam of the gaslight, Mr. Grey saw that the drunkard was his brother William!

CHAPTER XVIII.

“ AND now for Rosa’s history ?”

“ A mere blank—at least, a bare outline, not to be followed or filled up at present.”

“ And why not ?”

“ My dear Gerald, let me rest in peace ; don’t torture me with questions. Did you ever feel as Romeo felt when he knocked at the physician’s door in Mantua ?”

“ What, in love ?”

“ Love ! No ; or yes, as you please ; at any rate, sick of life ?”

“ Well, yes,—once when I was a little boy, an unconscious Cato, driven to extremi-

ties at a child's party, and meditating on my bane and antidote."

"Oh, you talk nonsense!"

"No, I don't! I am giving you a real experience. A little lady of twelve had driven me to unripe distraction, and I felt somewhat as you suggest."

"I'm not trifling, Gerald!"

"No more am I. And it occurred to me, in the very hurricane of my grief, that in an old book of Roman history I had seen a picture of Brutus, falling on his own sword. I longed for a sword, that I might imitate Brutus! But matters changed: the little lady pouted and was penitent; and before the cake was all eaten, I loved life as well as the unhappy old woman who ran all round the scaffold to escape the executioner!"

"Oh, I see; you tack a moral to your nonsense, and would have me lay it to heart."

"I would."

Richard's only answer was a heavy sigh,

after which little ebullition of feeling he made a miserable attempt to proceed with his breakfast.

For it was at that pleasant meal—pleasant for people with leisure ; harrassing and unhealthy for bond-slaves with luxurious inclinations and strict hours of business—that the conversation recorded took place. It was in the artist's parlour, too, where, during the night, Michael Angelo and Raffaele had looked down upon a face—that at such a time was new to them. This face was Richard Maldon's,—troubled, restless, and a mere plaything for the graver passions ! His companion's face was happy in its indications ; for he had delicious, delusive dreams. He was with Blanche in the wood again ; but Blanche was a woman, and the flowers given and exchanged, were eloquent with the language of love ! Still, true to the tenor of the children's meeting, this meeting of grown-up lovers ended roughly. The cruel uncle was transformed

into De Lisle, who came and snatched Blanche away, and—as in most dreams—Gerald was powerless to resist! He started up, shook his friend rudely, and dispossessed him of the nightmare!

“Get up,” he said. And in return he heard the voice of the sluggard! But he persevered: “Up with you!—we must be at work early to-day. Our doubts—I mean your doubts—have to be settled; and if you are not ready for the task, I am. This day, vainly or not, for your sake I shall seek your sister!”

Richard awoke now. “If for *my* sake, you do anything of the kind, I shall be seriously annoyed. But one thing you may do. I can’t trust myself to go to the hotel. Will you go there, and see if there’s a letter for me? It is my last gleam of hope.”

Matters were thus arranged; the two men rose, allowed the little servant to do away with all traces of the sleeping apart-

ment; and, after a certain time passed in the studio, and a visit to a neighbouring bath where the dyspeptic might and sometimes did get appetites; they sat down to breakfast. They soon left the table, however, Gerald going on his mission to the hotel; Richard taking a book, and trying to find relief from his heavy sorrows.

At the hotel, Gerald met his first disappointment: of course there was no letter! The loquacious waiter, too, even at so short a notice, had forgotten Richard. His mind went wool-gathering for a time; and then as an item fished from the very dregs and bottom of his memory, he exclaimed,—

“Maldon, Maldon, Maldon!—yes, sir, I do recollect something of such a party. But there’s nothing here for him.”

With this poor information, Gerald scarcely cared to return to his friend: he recollected Richard’s words—“It is my last gleam of hope!”—and he was ill-disposed

to dispel such a gleam hastily. Had it been later in the day, he might have gone direct to keep the appointment with his old patron. But, thought Gerald, the kind old gentleman is now sipping his coffee and reading his newspaper, and may not care to be disturbed. A few hours, however, may be easily whiled away in London; so the artist wandered aimlessly through the ramification of dull streets and desolate squares that once made up the "West-End" of the Metropolis. Once, indeed!—for the compass of fashionable life has since suffered considerable variation, and the old locality may well cry—*Sic transit gloria!*—where is the West-End now?

Wandering thus idly, he came upon a famous street, crooked, narrow, and ill-arranged, but the name of which has still sweet seductions for the select few. He was there attracted by a trifling interlude that would have escaped any other than an

idler. A lady and gentleman—the one remarkable for her brilliant black eyes, her tall stature and majestic presence; the other for his cold and haughty bearing—were stepping into a brougham that stood at an hotel door. They were suddenly pounced upon and interrupted by a fair, blue-eyed, yellow-moustached gentleman, whose somewhat ungainly figure was leaning over the neck of a thorough-bred.

“Ah! how de do?” said the latter. “Don’t get in yet; I’ve something to say, and my horse won’t stand the rattle of wheels! Where are you going? How is it you’re alone?—where’s Miss Blanche? Where’s our brother?”

The gentleman partly addressed, frowned; but the lady smiled, shook her head wickedly, and replied,—

“Oh, they have left us! Something has happened! They’ve gone into retirement, and there’s no telling when we shall see them again!”

“What!—Monsieur De Lisle gone off with Miss Maldon?” exclaimed the rider.

“Yes!—very strange, isn’t it? But such things will happen!” And the lady stepped into the brougham.

Gerald — at first passing slowly, then suddenly transfixed to the flag-stones—heard all this, and the meaning it conveyed to him was at once apparent. De Lisle gone off with Miss Maldon. Then Richard’s suspicions were only too correct! Well, there was an end to the poor artist’s romance!—there was the finishing touch to his fanciful, dreamy, picture! Never more could he look upon that picture with hope; but might turn its fair face to the wall for aye now! Passionate heart, be still! With the world empty, the sun eclipsed, what is there to live for!

He walked moodily away, and went to the house of his good old patron. He was so sad himself, that he scarcely noticed how sad the house was!—scarcely saw that from

the basement to the roof the dull, white blinds told their story of disaster! He knocked mechanically, and, after some shuffling of feet in the passage and some consequent delay, he was admitted and shown into a dull ante-room that yesterday—indeed all the days that Gerald knew of—had been kept for the accommodation of strangers. He listened, however, for the kindly voice of his old patron, calling to him as it sometimes did, and saying “Ah! master artist!—this way, this way!—what a fine morning!” or a dull morning, or a wet morning, as the case might be. But there was no greeting like this now! In place of it, when he was chilled with waiting, he heard a harsh, querulous voice, holding parley with the servant in the passage:

“Who is this ‘Mr. Grey?’—what does he want? Oh, he’s a painter, is he?—daubs those things in the gallery?” And presently the voice came nearer, and addressed Gerald in the ante-room:

“ Your business, sir ?” it said.

“ Is with Mr. ——,” replied the artist.

“ It might have been, yesterday,” answered the stranger, “ But to-day, it must be with me.”

“ With you ?”

“ Yes, sir, with me. A somewhat mournful event has happened, as you might have seen by the aspect of the house—the house of which, I may mention, I am now the master.”

Poor Gerald !—this was Pelion upon Ossa ! Newly afflicted, as he was, with one great grief, here was another coarsely flung at him, as though to overwhelm his spirit with agony !

The stranger regarded his terrible bewilderment with curiosity. “ Excuse me,” he said, “ But I believe that my late cousin had no relation but myself. May I, then, ask the cause of this display of emotion ?”

Display of emotion ! The words stung

Gerald, and kept his tears from falling faster.

“ Sir !” he exclaimed, “ The cause is simple enough ! The unfortunate gentleman now, I suppose, represented by you, was my earliest and kindest friend. Years ago, he took me by the hand, encouraged me, and helped me to become what I am ! I saw him last night—to-day I was to see him again. Now, sir, is the cause of my ‘ emotion’ made clearer to you ?”

“ The cause of your *disappointment* is, I confess. I know that my cousin was a liberal man, that he busied himself a little too liberally, perhaps, in other people’s affairs. But, my dear sir, there is an end to everything : my cousin’s liberality could scarcely last for ever !”

“ No,” said Gerald, mournfully.

“ And for my own part,” continued the stranger, “ I may as well mention that pictures are *not* the things upon which *I*

should be inclined to spend money, and so you see——”

“ Sir !” replied Gerald, I require no explanation of that kind.”

“ Well, then,” returned the cousin, “ our business is at an end. Good day, sir. John ! —the door !”

And Gerald mechanically left the room, and passed the threshold.

He turned back, however, and gazed sorrowfully at the house. His hand was on the knocker again—for a thought came to him :—Might he not take a last look at the cold clay, that when warm with life and instinct with goodness, he had loved with a son’s affection? Alas ! alas !—there was the new master, even between life and death ! Merciful Heaven !—what a change in those few gloomy hours between sunset and sunrise !

CHAPTER XIX.

LADY MALDON'S health had improved, but still she was much shaken, and not the Lady Maldon of yesterday. She had lapsed into a state of dreary mental convalescence, and, scarcely strong enough for violence, was a victim to low, melancholic hysteria. She had more tears than words, and more vacant moments than either. A stout nurse attended her in place of a thin lady's maid; and when she left the house for the garden, she was carried to a chair, and so wheeled about. To pass away her evenings, she played imperfectly at cards, and the only

time at which she showed any sign of animation was when her opponent humoured her by placing all the tricks on her side. The court cards, however, set her thinking, and when the queen of diamonds came to her hand, the game was interrupted, and she was thoughtful. She fancied herself in some way the double of this queen, and often objected seriously to the style in which Delarue delighted to dress her. To obviate this, De Lisle got her a pack of French cards, in which the queen was dressed reasonably, and the pre-Raphaelitism taken out of her. After this, her ladyship was more content with mimic majesty, and played the queen of diamonds without hesitation.

When the sun was favourable in the morning, she took the benefit of its meridian, and De Lisle attended her in the garden in place of the stout nurse. He beguiled the time by relating those historical anecdotes for which he was famous, and

which had the additional charm of being narrated by a descendant of the very people who had acted, or had helped to act, the historiettes themselves. She was not, however, a participator in the conversation, and the light of her historical lore was not shed upon them as of old. She merely nodded, smiled, and gave to them the sympathy of motion. Anything very exciting would, perhaps, cause her to look up with more than ordinary energy, and say—"Well, Chevalier?" but beyond this her lively interest ceased. She was in fact, making a dreary journey of the last few miles towards that bourne from whence no traveller returns.

Blanche was not more than a daughter to her—for such a comparison should not be; but she was, perhaps, more than many daughters are under the ordinary family dispensation. The love that, in earlier days, had at starting been turned aside by the scant recognition of a conscious woman,

went straight to where duty directed now ; and though it was poorly accepted and scarcely understood, it never flagged nor fell back for want of reciprocation. There is no need to think Blanche a paragon for this ; for a paragon should be singular, while, happily, we may use round numbers when reckoning up the good women in the world. She was, perhaps, in a minority ; but from that minority it is the privilege of a story-teller to pick, and the privilege is at least an elevating one.

Therefore Blanche was thankful to De Lisle for his cheering attention to her mother. She felt that he was a fellow-labourer in the work of consolation ; and an instinctive but unobtrusive knowledge of her own goodness made this fellowship almost holy to her ! How near she was upon, and yet how far from, loving him for this, may be understood by those who dive into niceties of sentiment ; and perhaps De

Lisle may be excused for judging from appearances and using the lights he had in coming to a false conclusion. Excused or not, he did come to this conclusion, and he believed that a word might finish his artifices.

Upon one point, however, he was dissatisfied: in a moment of confidence, Blanche had spoken of Richard, and expressed her anxiety about his strange silence. Of course she had had no answer to her letter—to any of her letters. The second one—one that, as she posted it herself, had reached the hotel—was returned to her with the ominous words “not known there”.—kindly suggested by the loquacious waiter; another and another came back with just the same dreary addition. She showed these to De Lisle, and he sympathised with her in words, and suggested many plausible reasons why Richard was not to be heard of. But, against his advice, she sent a special mes-

senger to London, to do what, could she have gone herself, would have been her own duty.

This messenger—provided liberally with money, and even aided by a written *précis* for his guidance—went to London and exerted himself with all the alacrity of an agent. He made the hotel at which Richard had lodged his head-quarters, and from thence he sallied forth daily upon what he conceived to be his mission. The parks, he thought, were likely places to find the truant in; and, next to the parks, the suburban ale-houses and tea-gardens. There were some dancing-rooms, too, to which an enterprising lessee who had heard of Italy or played a strange game at cards, had given the name of casino; and to these and their frequenters the missionary paid due attention. There was a place, approached by a filthy court in the Strand, and aptly enough called “Cellars,” but of which the other title was altogether

delusive ; and, not far off, another place, approached by an equally filthy court, where the Chief Baron of fast men and *flâneurs* held nightly orgie with certain clever but cadaverous creatures whose tongues were gifted or cursed with indecent eloquence. To these resorts the messenger paid occasional visits in search of Richard ; but in vain. He happened to be a ten-pounder in the franchise, and so he got into the Strangers' Gallery of the House of Commons ; and Richard was not there ! Neither was he to be found in Holborn, at the house where the Learned Pig divided attention with Tim Bobbin, and where the Pig-faced Lady put even the Learned Pig out of countenance ! This was dispiriting ; but thinking that Richard might be discovered on the top of the Monument, the missionary toiled his way up thither, and spent at least an hour in looking between the railings. Still being unsuccessful, he tried the Whispering Gallery of St.

Paul's, and, on the same day, the Poet's Corner of Westminster Abbey. At last, after failing to find the missing gentleman in the Diving-bell at a popular Institution near Regent Street, or in the Ascending-room of a dull exhibition near a north-westerly park,—he returned to the hotel, and questioned the loquacious waiter.

“Maldon, sir?” was the waiter's reply—
“Maldon!—a young man, shortish, no whiskers, rather mean appearance, and not over good-looking?”

“Very likely,” said the missionary, laughing, “I believe he wasn't exactly the man to fall in love with at first sight.”

“I daresay it's him!” exclaimed the waiter.

“And might you know anything about him now?”

“Nothing at all. Letters have come for him, but we've sent 'em back again. He was turned out of this house, sir!”

“Turned out?”

“ Ah, that he was!—and for conduct unbecoming of a gentleman !”

“ Indeed !” replied the missionary, giving a filip to the waiter’s loquacity by displaying considerable interest.

“ Yes, sir—for conduct unbecoming of a gentleman ! I’ll tell you the story. He was never, you know, sir, exactly the sort of man to make a good impression on people ; his bill, sir, was a mere trifle, and as to his behaviour, I can call it nothing but abstemious and shabby. He was always reading or else writing ; and if you once give him the paper, heaven help the gentleman that might be a waiting for it ! He reads at his meal-times, sir ; and the man who does that can’t eat as he should do ! He used to say to me,—‘ Waiter,’ says he, ‘ I’ll take a chop,’ or it might be a kidney, or some little kickshaw of that sort ! ‘ Yes, sir,’ says I, ‘ but we’ve ’are soup, and vermicelli, and ox-tail, sir—will you take some ’are soup ?’ ‘ No,’ says he, ‘ I’ll take what

I've ordered!' Now, I put it to you, sir, whether this is how a gentleman that is a gentleman, behaves?"

The missionary thought decidedly not: it was "un-English."

"Well, sir, I'm coming to the story now. You must know, sir, that he came home here one day and ordered a private room, and he hadn't been in it long before he ran out, caught the housemaid on the stairs, and acted most shameful to her! That gal's character is unrepachable, or there's no telling what might have happened! Well, as the maid wouldn't have anything to say to him, what did he do but run out again, and hit right and left at the man who waited on him! He tried the same game on with the landlord when he went up; but, between you and me, sir, the landlord can handle his daddles, *he* can—(you might have heard of him, perhaps, when he was the 'Slogger's Novice!')—and he gave my young gentleman a shaking that he won't

forget in a hurry ;—when all at once, who should come in but a confederate of his ; and so they both got away together ! Ah ! it's a mercy for that young man that he wasn't prosecuted ; as it is, he'd better not show his face here again !”

With these experiences, and this poor information, the missionary returned to Blanche. With added effect, and heightened colour, he repeated the waiter's story, and shed about it such a criminal halo, that the poor sister listened in shame and wonder :

“ Says I, Miss, and says he,—‘ Indeed,’ says I. ‘ Yes,’ says he. ‘ Well,’ says I, ‘ I *am* surprised !’—‘ No doubt,’ says he,—‘ Well,’ says I,—‘ who'd have thought it !’ ”

The manner in which the man told the story, his pretended reticence, and the mystery in which he was pleased to shroud it, gave Blanche an impression that Richard, if at liberty, was hiding from the vengeance of the hotel people ; and thus she had, as she thought, a complete clue to his silence.

She dismissed the man, however, with many thanks, gave him an extra fee that he might keep his tongue still, and made him a pensioner upon her fears for many months to come.

In great difficulties, simple remedies are often the last thought of ; so, after other means had been exhausted, Blanche recollected that one course had been untried. Directly this thought came to her, she sat down, intending to write a letter to the artist—to Richard's chosen friend ! But at the very first line she paused, and a sense of delicacy hindered her progress. To any other man in the world it would have been easy to have begun " Dear Sir," and to have concluded with the ridiculous white lie, " yours obediently." But to Gerald, it seemed too much to say " Dear Sir," and yet too ungracious to leave out that often ill-used prefix. This was a great obstacle ; but the greatest, perhaps, occurred when Blanche recollected that of the artist's

detailed address she was entirely ignorant ! Thus Gerald was deprived of what to him would have been a great glory, and Richard was left to his wilful course of mistake ! However, there was no help for it ; and all the world knows that the most insignificant trifles often bring about the greatest results. A lightning-storm may sweep harmlessly through the spires of a town or across the gathered riches of half a county ; but let a spark, dropped from a labourer's pipe, get into a quiet corner,—and lo ! the heavens reflect an Etna !

So the time passed away with Blanche,—hoping, fearing for her brother, lessening, as well as she could, the affliction of Lady Maldon, listening to De Lisle, and now and then reading a letter from Marie, or receiving one from Sir Roger.

A letter came one day from Marie, however, that De Lisle did not show to Blanche, but took direct to his chamber, and then

and there sat down and answered. A sentence of the answer ran thus :

“ Give me two days. Do nothing, promise nothing, till the end of that time. Should we both be suited in this family, very good. Should we not, never mind. At any rate, if you do not hear from me during the next forty-eight hours, take your own course, and I shall not complain.”

The day following, De Lisle allowed Lady Maldon to be wheeled about alone, and devoted himself assiduously to her daughter. He sat with Blanche, and read to her from the *feuilleton* portion of an exaggerated play-bill called a French newspaper. He translated as he went on, and though Blanche paid attention to the story, her heart was occupied otherwise than with the stereotyped agitations of the people of fiction. De Lisle used the paper as a resort, as something to fall back upon when he might say too much or have nothing to say ;

and thus he was enabled to converse with ease and take his opportunity at leisure.

He went on in this way for some time ; indeed, he had nearly exhausted the *feuilletton*, when he came upon a charming passage. Fifine had taken leave of François ; they had pressed each other's hands—each other's hearts. The seal of love—so often imitated, so often broken—had just left their lips. “ Adieu ! ” said Fifine ; “ Adieu ! ” said François ; and the lovers parted.

“ And we, too,” said De Lisle, laying aside the paper,—“ must part ! Why do I stay ?—Am I not thoroughly recovered ?—Then why, why do I stay ? ”

Blanche smiled at his vehemence, and asked him if he was tired of the country.

“ Tired of the country ! ” he replied, “ no, no,—not with you for a companion. It would be denying all I know of happiness to admit so much ! ”

He took up the paper again and re-

sumed the story ; for Blanche still listened to him as though what he said was taken from the *feuilleton*, and she seemed to expect the print and paper heroine to answer his ecstasies. The story, however, came to an end, and De Lisle tried his listener again :

“ Yes,” he continued, “ I ask you, why do I stay ?—why am I here at all ?—and what sweet society is it that detains me ?”

“ You may, indeed, ask that !” returned Blanche, waking up a little—“ I often think the place must be very dull for you—you who are so used to a different life !”

“ Oh no,—not dull !” exclaimed De Lisle,—“ not dull ! There are the birds singing, the bees humming, and the fields wooing one to exercise ! Without the house there is a charm peculiar to rural England ; while within it, there is a charm greater than all ; and that charm is—yourself !”

This was all clumsy enough, and scarcely

worthy of De Lisle ; but in its very poverty of style Blanche thought she detected an unusually fervent tone. She began to be a little alarmed. He saw this, and went on :

“ Yourself ! It is for you I stay here ; for you I have so long forgone all that hitherto I lived for. Blanche, dear Blanche ! I love you !”

Blanche started.

“ Surely,” she said, “ you are not speaking seriously—you are not in earnest, Monsieur ?”

“ I am !” replied De Lisle, rising, and flinging the paper from him. “ Every word I utter comes from my heart, and has been long, long waiting to burst from my lips ! In return, I ask you, too, to be in earnest — Blanche !—and to tell me that this love is returned !”

In the agitation of the moment, De Lisle had taken the hand of his bewildered, wonder-stricken companion. He was not satisfied with having gone thus far : he pre-

pared to dally with the favour, and at last he lifted it to his lips. But his lips met only the air, for Blanche recovered herself.

"You surprise me," she said, "with this language! Surely you are not, you cannot be, in earnest!"

She trembled violently, and looked to De Lisle for explanation:

"I am," he said, "as earnest as ever I was in my life!"

"Then, replied Blanche, "do not, I entreat you, speak further upon a subject that cannot be more than disappointment to you, and less than painful to me!"

"I now ask you," said De Lisle, frowning slightly, and quite losing his love-tones, "are *you* in earnest?"

"As ever *I* was in my life!" returned Blanche, adopting De Lisle's strong words because she was abashed and quite at a loss for words of her own.

"You are?"

"I am."

“Miss Maldon!” exclaimed De Lisle verging upon passion,—“I do not believe you!”

It was difficult to answer this; but Blanche approached the angry man kindly, and offered him the hand she had lately drawn away in wonderment. He took it; but as he did so, the hope it gave him was destroyed by a few quiet, serious words:

“Let us fall back upon our feelings of friendship, Monsieur, and leave that unsaid which may make even friendship impossible:”

De Lisle dropped her hand, and started back, “Friendship!” he repeated,—“Friendship! We are not acting a charade!—we are not *playing* the part of lover and mistress! At least *I* am not. What I say I mean, and the mock heroics of the stage are not palatable to me!”

“Nor are they to me!” replied Blanche, growing less considerate as De Lisle hurled his sneers at her, “I never was less inclined to mockery in my life. I ask you, as a

favour, to let this conversation end now, and to avoid it in future. If I have ever given you cause for it, believe me, I deeply regret that I should have been so forgetful of myself and so unjust to you. I would not willingly have led one I respect——”

“That will do!” interrupted De Lisle, “How much you respect me I have no wish to know. Give me your hand again.”

Blanche, simply enough, did as she was desired.

“Now,” said De Lisle, drawing her closer to him, and regarding her with the stiletto glance that has been mentioned,—“listen to me. You offer me your friendship, your respect, and such common-place regards as are always ready for the asking; and you blush, and start, and pretend to be surprised that I expected anything else. Now, I am no whining lover, willing to take what he can get, and to hope for more; and therefore, I must say what I think, at any cost.”

Blanche tried to free her hand; but De

Lisle was too strong for her, and still kept drawing her closely beneath his eyes.

“And what I think is this. Have we not sat together, walked together, and cultivated such intercourse as might well make people wonder if we were ever separated? Have you not listened to me up to this very moment, and pleased yourself with the preface while you reject the story? You have. And, then, what am I here for, idling in a dull country house?—why were you sent to keep me company?—why did you press me to come, and then, as soon as I decided to do so, make up your mind to come, too? Of course, you have excuses for all this; but I have not! You see, I speak my mind upon such trifling; and I now ask—Have you anything to answer?”

He released her hand, and she drew back. Her tears were falling fast, for she saw too well how plausible an argument De Lisle could make out.

“But a word more,” he continued.

“ When I tell you that it is your mother’s wish you should listen to me, are you moved ? In my country, such a wish would be almost equivalent to a law ! ”

If for harmony’s sake, De Lisle had struck a wrong chord now. The will of that poor incapable who was wheeled about the garden, humoured at cards, and altogether treated like a child, should, Blanche thought, have been at least sacred from De Lisle’s tampering ! At one blow, he struck away all her remorse and half her pity !

“ Monsieur De Lisle ! ” she replied, firmly. “ You have now said that which gives me freedom of speech. I have the courage to tell you now—plainly and truly—that from this moment we must part. I never have loved, never could love you. You have been the victim of a mistake ; and that I regret most sincerely.”

While De Lisle stood, looking at her and listening in amazement, she took her advantage of position, and left the room. Her

sometime companion, after repeating again and again Othello's miserable reproach, went to the window, opened it, and so tried to cool himself. After a short period passed thus, he returned to his chamber, and there wasted away his passion in a letter. He folded the letter rather hastily, and—by some strange mischance—omitted to seal it! Then he left the house, hurried across the few fields that led to the village, and dropped the unsealed letter into the box at the post-office. The rest of the day he occupied himself with gathering together his wardrobe; and in the morning he came down calmly enough to breakfast, and said to Lady Maldon—who happened to be out of bed at that early time:

“I shall not be your guest longer. All our pleasures must have an end, and with them, the pleasure this house has been good enough to afford me. I shall be in London this evening. Have you any commands?”

“London this evening!” said her ladyship.

waking up, "Oh dear me! how very annoying! Blanche, my dear, why is the Chevalier going to be in London this evening?"

Blanche shook her head.

"Well, if I were you, Blanche, I should not let him go. London this evening! Dear me! how very strange! London this evening—London this evening—London this evening."

And so the conversation died away.

Half-an-hour afterwards De Lisle took a formal leave of Blanche; but although she watched the avenue for some time, she did not see him depart. He had escaped her, she thought. But going to the room in which Lady Maldon was accustomed to rest herself, she heard his voice and her mother's:

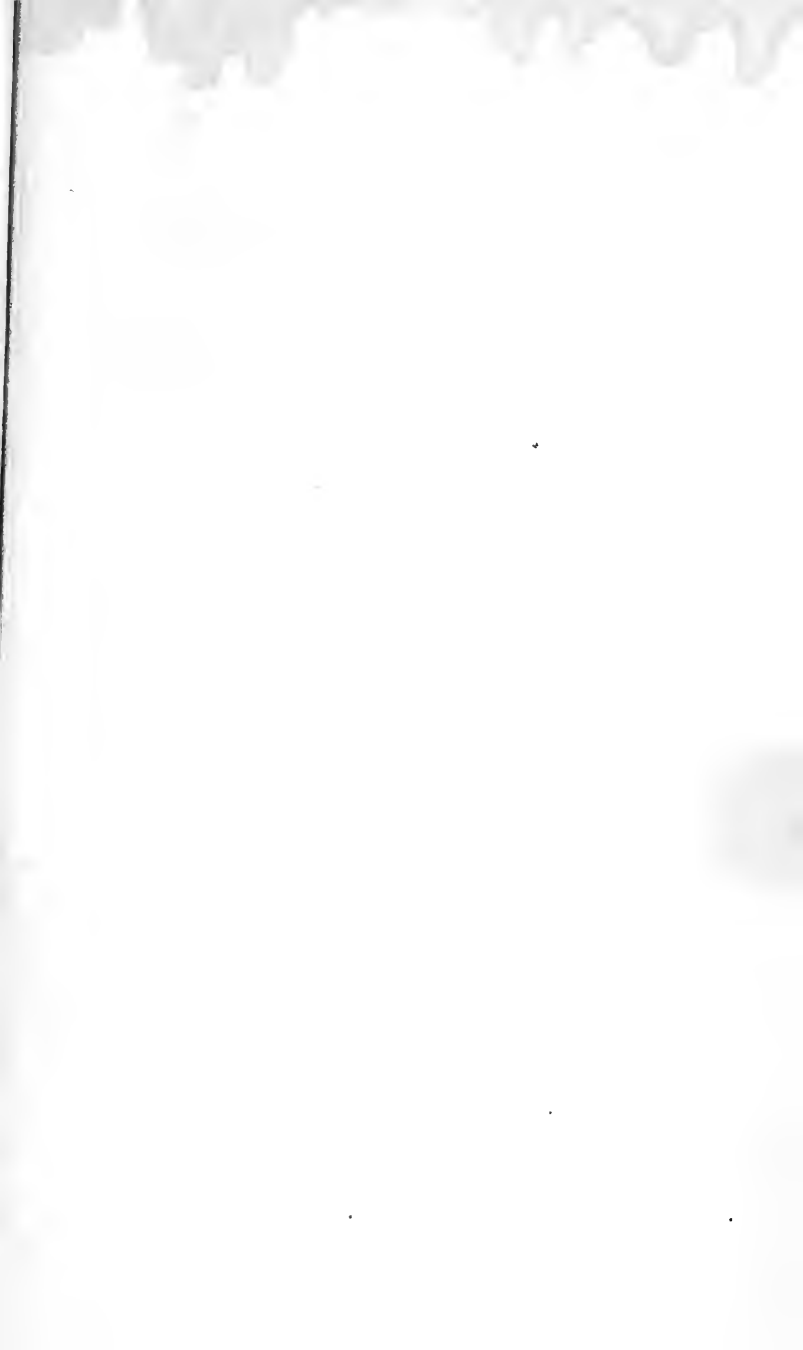
"Good bye, Chevalier," said the latter.
"There, you may kiss my hand! You'll come back soon, won't you?—And mind you don't forget that little business of mine in

town! There, there are the things; take care of them. It's very curious you should be going. Good bye!"

Blanche hesitated, and held back. De Lisle left the chamber, and came hurriedly upon the listener.

"Ah!" he said, "another parting! Adieu!" And he left the place, apparently in great good humour.

END OF VOL. II.



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